

























# John King's Question Class

BY ✓

CHARLES M. SHELDON

AUTHOR OF "IN HIS STEPS, 'WHAT WOULD JESUS DO?' "

"THE CRUCIFIXION OF PHILLIP STRONG,"

"HIS BROTHER'S KEEPER," ETC.

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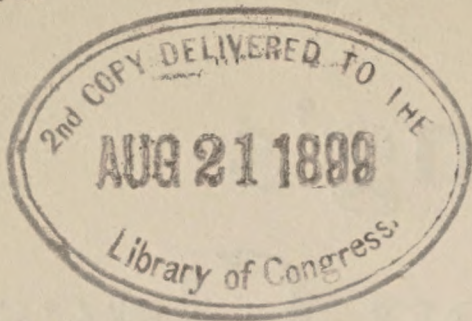
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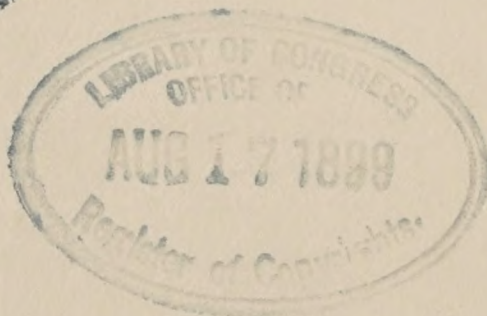
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## PREFACE

This little story like all the others written by me was first read to my own Sunday evening congregation in the Central Church, Topeka, Kansas.

The questions in the story are literal copies of the questions actually asked during the reading of the story by the young people in my own congregation. Every Sunday a list of written questions was handed me by the young people and during the week I put them into the chapter of the story read at the next Sunday evening service.

This fact accounts for the nature of the questions asked. There has been no attempt in this little story to give long, complete, exhaustive answers to wise, theological, or deeply philosophical questions. If the answers seem sometimes to be very incomplete it is simply because I intended them to suggest rather than exhaust the subject in each case. If the questions seem sometimes to be lacking in depth or power it is simply because they are questions that living people often ask. The reader of this story will please remember that the story was planned and written and read first of all for a living audience of my own, whose needs I was trying to meet as I knew them.

The story was helpful to my own young people when it was read to them. I send it out in the printed form praying that it may add, even a little, to the Christian life of young people everywhere.

CHARLES M. SHELDON.

Topeka, Kansas, Central Church. 1899.



This book is dedicated, with many good wishes, to Mr. J. L. Stilner the original publisher of "In His Steps". I owe him a debt of gratitude for the spirit in which he has undertaken the publication of that book and other volumes of mine, and it adds to the distinct pleasure of our business relations to know that a personal friendship has grown out of them.

Charles M. Shildon

Central Church,

Topeka, Kansas.

April 19. 1899.



# JOHN KING'S QUESTION CLASS.

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## CHAPTER I.



IT was nearly time for the concert to begin. People were still coming into the hall, however, and the orchestra had not yet taken its place. There was an expectant air about the audience as if it had come out to hear something unusual. By the time the orchestra had come up and begun to tune its instruments, nearly every seat in the large building was taken. Still the people continued to come and the wide space under the balcony at the rear filled up with those who were compelled to stand.

Behind the curtain in a small room close by the front of the stage, two persons were sitting. They were brother and sister. Other persons were going and coming from other rooms surrounding the stage, and the excitement which always belongs to a concert where several singers and performers make their first public



appearance was apparent in the movements and manner of those who were to take part.

The two sitting in the small room, however, were left alone for a little while. The brother was more nervous than the sister. He rose every few moments to look out through a hole in the curtain or to view his appearance, what he could see of it, in a very small mirror which he put back each time into his vest pocket.

"Don't you begin to feel nervous yet, Vi?" The brother put the question after one of his trips to the curtain and the announcement that it was going to be a crowded house.

"No, I can't say that I do very much, Vic," said the sister. She sat quietly in the same place with a violin on her lap and a score of music on a rack near by.

"Well, I don't understand you, Victoria. All last week and this up to six o'clock this evening you have been worrying over our comeout to-night. And now you sit there as unconcerned as if you knew you wouldn't forget a note when you know you will have to face all the best musicians in the city."

"I know I shall not forget," replied the sister; "But you will, Victor, if you don't quiet yourself."

"I will! I know I will!"



“You ought to say, ‘shall.’ How often have I corrected your use of the future—”

“Now, Vi, I can stand a good deal but I can’t stand being corrected for my grammar to-night. Don’t you see what misery I’m in? I’ve got stage fright the worst kind. I know I can’t remember half the words to that first song and I come on number two. And I’ve got an awful cold and my collar is melted right off of me and my hands tremble so that people will know I am scared to death.” He rose again and going to the curtain, looked out, throwing sentences in a subdued voice to the sister.

“My! Ain’t there a jam though! Lots of folks standing up under the gallery. There’s Doc. Palfrey and his wife and some one else in the front row. They’re fearful critical. I know I will, ‘shall,’ I mean, go all to pieces if Mrs. Palfrey once fixes me with her cold icicle kind of a smile. Don’t you feel it growing chillier already? There’s Mr. Clayton and his sister just sitting down in the middle front row of the balcony. Clayton has a good ear for music. Seems to appreciate the violin, don’t you think, Vi? Something or other draws him to our house a good deal lately. Wonder if he comes to hear me sing? Say, Vi,” the brother left the curtain and came back to his sister. “I’m really afraid



I shall go to pieces before that audience. I'm only talking to keep up appearances. Help me out, won't you, Vi, that's a good fellow?"

He laid his hand on his sister's and spoke half in fun and half in earnest but he was really very much excited and the girl replied seriously,

"Victor, if you break down to night or fail to do yourself justice I shall walk out of the hall and feel disgraced as long as I live. Remember father!" It was wonderful to see the effect of this brief, almost sharp, response to the appeal for encouragement. The boy, "young man" he called himself, though he was not yet of age, quivered all over. Then his slight form stiffened, he thrust one hand deep into his pocket and ran the other hand up through a head of hair as black as hair ever is, until it stood up in confusion all over. His whole appearance was so different in a moment from the nervous, dandified, almost flippant youth who had whimpered in tones of half jest and earnest that Victoria smiled. She had looked and spoken sternly.

"What are you laughing at?" asked Victor suddenly.



"Better look in your glass and see. But you won't fail, will you, dear?"

"No danger," replied the brother very calmly.

He took out his pocket mirror and arranged his tumbled hair, the sister looking on, amused at the display of a very marked personal vanity.

"There, I'm all right now. See me, Vi! Feel my pulse. Want to look at my tongue? Where's that cough lozenge? Oh, here in my vest pocket. You needn't fear. I won't disgrace you. Dear old father! To think I had almost forgotten him. I'm awful selfish when I'm thinking about myself. Most folks are, don't you think? But I'm all right again now, Vi." And he went back to his place by the curtain and just then some other persons came in and the orchestra opened the evening's program with its overture.

The curtain went up and the first player from the performers behind the scenes went on with a piano solo.

But the special interest of the audience in this particular concert which occurred not many years ago, was on account of the appearance in public of the twin brother and sister, Victor and Victoria Stanwood. It would take too long to relate all the reasons which led up to the fact of such a crowded and almost excited audience of



the best musicians in the city to listen to the musical performance of two persons not twenty years old. Certain very remarkable qualities in both brother and sister, even at this very early age, had given them recognition as artists even before their public appearance. And when Victor at the close of the first number came out after his accompanist and stood before the audience that crowded every corner of the great hall, he faced people who had heard so much about him and expected so much from him that it would not have been surprising if a stouter heart than his had throbbed with fever at the ordeal of satisfying such a gathering. For with his natural talent as a musician he was but an undeveloped inexperienced lad. And in spite of his promise to his sister and the thought of what disgrace would follow failure on this occasion, his knees shook, his tongue seemed to fill his mouth, and his lips were dry. He knew that the accompanist had finished the few notes, instrumental to his song, and he knew that he had failed to make an audible sound on the very first word. It was a crisis in his life, so he magnified the occasion, and if in that brief second he had turned and fled from the stage it is probable that the entire course of the lives of at least two of the persons in this story would have been completely changed.



But his voice came to him on the second note and with the utterance in his ears, instantly all thought of his audience was gone. The player at the piano had halted just a fraction of time, but went right on, and Victor sang out with the voice that God had given him and the people looked and listened. With the exception of that slight failure many a gifted musician in the audience declared to himself as Victor went on that the most beautiful tenor voice heard in years was being heard in that hall that night. And yet, when he finished, the applause was not the kind that brings the performer back, flushed and triumphant. It was hearty and general, but the audience was critical, and that slight error at the beginning marred an otherwise almost perfect rendering. Besides, Victor was on the program for a second number. Evidently the audience intended to give him another trial before it took him into the popular favor.

He finished and went back, and the rest of the singers and players congratulated him.

He did not reply and as soon as it was evident that there was no encore for him he drew his sister back into the room farthest from the stage and while the next singer went on, he burst out in an angry whisper:

"I won't go on again to-night! I disgraced myself



and you and father and everybody. Oh, I am a fool! I can't control my miserable nerves! I never was meant for a public singer! I'll find a job to-morrow blacking boots or selling something on the street. Or else I'll get a hand organ and a monkey and travel, and train the monkey to turn the handle when I lose control of myself before an audience."

Victoria looked at him a moment in silence. She was excited for the first time in the evening and angry, but not at Victor. She could not understand why the audience had refused to call Victor back. And she felt indignant to think that such a slight thing as the omission of one note would count with an audience in such an event, as it evidently had.

"Vic," she said, "your singing was perfect. Your voice is a true tenor of unusual quality and those people know it. Disgraced! The people do not know what is right. I will show them! No. You must sing again. You will not be afraid any more! You must sing. Our future depends on winning this audience. Our very living is in the success of to-night."

Victor was silent a moment. He was growing out of the boy into the man and the events of the evening were developing him very rapidly. He walked up and down the little room and said,



“Vi, I wouldn’t go through that experience again for all the fame in creation. But—I believe I can win yet. I know I am not afraid any more. Did I look well?” He asked the question with a ludicrous change from his former angry petulance to inquisitive vanity.

Just then the singer who had gone on, finished and was recalled. “Your turn after the next, Victoria. Did I look well?”

“The back of your head was all I could see and it was very becoming and not at all pale,” replied his sister. “What do you care how you look, Victor, when your gift lies in your voice?”

“I care a good deal,” said Victor who never lost his temper at any remarks on his personal vanity. He took out his mirror, arranged his tie and carefully brushed up his thick black hair from his forehead.

“I must go forward now, Vic,” said his sister as the next performer was nearing the end of her song.

“You are not the least nervous?” Victor asked with admiration. Victoria shook her head firmly. “See,” she said. She held out her violin at arm’s length with the music score between her fingers in such a way that the least possible trembling would have fluttered the paper against the instrument. Victor smiled and kissed



her. She dropped the music and turning away, walked up to the entrance, ready to go on.

Her whole soul was in the part now before her. The audience saw come upon the stage a small, quiet figure, a well shaped mouth, undaunted eyes and a spirit of mastery and communion with the instrument that every audience loves to see in a public instrumentalist. The first touch of her bow was imperative. It seemed to say to the violin, "We are very good friends but I am the superior. I must be obeyed." She played with no music before her. Nothing but the audience and its unhesitating sympathy. And she was certain of it from the very first note. She knew that, all the time she was playing. She knew also that she had never played better, with more fire, expression, real genius. And when the last note was played and she had left the stage, the storm of hand clapping and cheers seemed almost like a torrent leaping over the foot lights and sweeping her back behind the scenery.

There was no mistaking the applause. It was a recall. Victoria hesitated a moment urged by the other performers to go on again. But she refused. She was angry with the people for their treatment of Victor. "I tell you I won't go out again until my turn on the program!" She said to the leader of the concert when



he begged her to respond to the encore. She drew Victor back behind the scenery and even there the applause followed her. It would die down and then break out with greater volume. As long as it continued, the next singer on the program did not wish to appear. All the musicians gathered about Victoria. Even Victor entreated her to go out, even if only to bow. But Victoria sat immovable and unmoved.

"I will not go until my turn," she said.

"Oughtn't you to say 'I shall not go?'" asked Victor.

"Either word is correct this time," said Victoria smiling just a little.

"But it is rude to the audience not even to acknowledge the recall with a bow," suggested the leader of the evening.

"Is it? It was very rude of them not to acknowledge Victor's singing." And Victoria turned her back on every one except Victor whose vanity received a fresh addition from his sister's action.

Finally the audience grew tired of clapping. Perhaps some of the musicians understood well enough why the violinist did not appear. However that may be, the program was taken up without the re-appearance of Victoria and after two or three brief numbers, Victor came on for his second song.



The audience warmly applauded as he came forward. One can never tell just what an audience will do on certain occasions. Evidently they had no grudge against him on account of his sister's obstinacy. He was very confident this time. His eye looked carefully over the house and far back in a seat under the balcony he saw a shabby figure in an old faded overcoat. The face of this figure was the face of one at war with himself. It was discolored and diseased with the passion of drink but the head was noble in its shape and crowned with a splendid mass of blackest hair. It was the sight of that head and the intent, hungry, half-shamed, half-proud look in the countenance that brought back to Victor's thought his sister's words, "Remember father." Yes, there he sat, their father; and the thought of what he was and what he was doing and what success or failure on the part of the twins might mean to him, nerved the boy to do what he did. And the audience was the delighted judge of it. Such a voice! There was much wanting in technique, in phrasing, in handling professionally. All that would come with riper years. But the voice itself was God-given. It filled the souls of all lovers of music with rare delight. This time the encore came swift and unmistakable. The voice had captured the audience.



And they yielded. Victor, proud, exultant, vain, came back, bowed, and then stepped back of the scenes. But the audience would not be satisfied. They must hear him again. And after a little he came forward again and sang even better than before and was recalled. There was no question of his triumph. It was complete. And when he had finished at last, even Victoria was satisfied. "It was beautiful. My dear, you did wonderfully. I did not think you could do so well." Victoria petted him until he was in danger of being completely spoiled. Victor took it more quietly than might have been expected. "I saw father back under the balcony, right hand side," he whispered to his sister.

There was no opportunity for brother and sister to talk together much more as the program was drawing to its close now and Victoria's was the last number. The success of Victor roused her to the highest pitch. And when at last she appeared before the audience she felt far beyond even her best self.

But never did a performer with so much at stake for future success in public have to overcome as Victoria had that night. She was well enough aware that her refusal to appear when called upon before was so altogether rude and unusual that she had offended very many of the best musicians in the house, even sup-



posing they understood her reason for not appearing. As she came forward now, it was in perfect silence. The audience was cold and hostile. She thought she saw a movement in the back of the hall as if some persons were going out before she began. Then her eyes caught the face of the figure in the shabby overcoat under the balcony. She was not frightened nor dismayed at the silence. And as she began, she saw nothing and no one in the audience but that one face of the father. As she went on she did not see even that. The passion of her music caught her up and carried her on its wave, while at the same time she seemed capable of directing the wave which bore her on. It was true she was outplaying herself, and it was also true she was gaining the audience. People leaned forward. Old musical critics listened with nods of approval. A rest in the violin while the piano played on, was broken by a sound of applause that instantly stopped as the violin went on again. But when she finished, she knew she had won the audience. The applause was continuous. The people instead of rising to go, remained seated, and waited for Victoria to come on again. She played a little slumber song without the piano and was encored for that. But she simply bowed in response, refusing to play more. And the concert was ended.



But the results of that evening with its incidents, small as they seem in the telling of them, were the results that Victoria had anticipated in the case of real success before such an audience. To tell what they were, we must follow Victor and his sister home.

The father was waiting a little beyond the stage entrance and as Victor and Victoria came out he joined them, Victoria taking his arm and Victor walking along by his side. They walked thus for half a mile before they turned into a court and opening a small door at the top of a short flight of stone steps entered a plain room which opened into two others with doors at opposite sides of the main or living room.

It is not the purpose of this story to go into details of the previous home life of Victor and his sister. Briefly, the mother had died when they were very young. The father with really rare musical abilities had lost one position after another through a childish lack of business ability as well as through a growing passion for drink, rendering him at times useless for days. At this particular time he was engaged in one of the smaller theatres as one of the orchestra. He still retained a few good pupils. But no one except Victoria could realize the little shifts and devices that the last few years



had known in providing for the common wants of the home. The father revered his children. In his worst moments of passion he would remain away from home for shame. The brother and sister for their part would have revered him if their pity and shame had not been far larger feelings. The thought of her father playing his violin in the orchestra of a disreputable amusement hall was poison to the thought of Victoria. The thought that he was doing it because it was necessary to do even that in order that they might all live, was agony to her. Many a night the young girl had waited until the step of her father sounded stumbling up the stone steps and she had seen him come in more than once reeling with exhaustion and the stupor of intoxication and fall across the floor, there to sleep off the effects of his passion while she would creep away and sob herself to sleep with the name of "God" and "mother" mingling in her prayer and speech and dream. Only the growing knowledge of her own musical power gave her courage to live as days grew on into years and she began to be a woman. Victor's voice, too, gave her hope. People, the public, that vague thing "the public," paid money for such voices. Some time they would be able to sell for food and clothes and luxuries the talents God had given them. Then the father



should leave his place and the growing disgrace and shame and agony would give way to better, happier times.

As the girl had encouraged the brother to develop his great natural gift, the father also in his better moments knew how to direct the musical studies of the twins. It was not surprising that assisted by nature's own gift to start with and by the very able direction of the father, the two had developed surprising power. One or two of Mr. Stanwood's pupils discovered the secret of rare musical ability in the violin and the voice at the old musician's house. It was not difficult for several parlor musicals at which the twins were invited to take part, to spread their fame as musicians about the city. Then when the large concert was projected by music lovers, the twins were secured, as already known in a smaller way to very many. It was, however, really their first large public appearance. And the occasion was of great importance to Victoria for the opportunity it would probably offer of securing some permanent position for Victor and herself where they could earn enough to support themselves and the father. It was true that all that evening, with all her love for her music and her complete joy in its performance, Victoria had felt running all through her thought as she



faced the people, "Will any one here, any manager or entertainment bureau or director, be likely to make me an offer to play anywhere for money?" That may sound very unpoetical and unmusical, but it is what lay in the girl's mind and what she was thinking of all the way home and as she talked over the evening and its triumph with Victor and the father.

"Well," said Victor, yawning, as he sat with his legs straight out before him and his hands deep in his pockets, "I'm sleepy and tired. I'm going to bed. It isn't healthy for tenors to sit up late."

He rose and went over and kissed Victoria, patting her on the cheek and saying, "You were my good angel to-night, Vi. If I have an offer to go on the road with a company I won't, or is it I 'shan't,' go, unless you go with me?"

He went over to his father, stooped and kissed his cheek as he had done ever since he was a boy two years old, said good night, and went up stairs. The father timidly spoke to Victoria, "My dear, you must be very tired. It has been a trying evening for you."

"No, father," said Victoria, "I am not tired. I am very strong. But it is late and I promised Aura that I would come early in the morning and play for her."



So good night, father.” She went over and as Victor had done she kissed him on the cheek. The father drew her down to him and returned the caress with unusual affection. Victoria felt it deeply. “Poor old father!” she said as she went out of the room.

The moment she was gone, her father rose and cautiously shut the doors leading to the upstairs rooms. He then walked very stealthily to a cupboard, took out a glass and with a trembling hand produced a bottle of whisky from his overcoat pocket. He sat down by the dining room table and drank until he was unable to walk across the room to his bed room which was at the other end of the dining room. He tried to lie down on a lounge near the door but fell upon the floor and there Victoria found him when she came down in the morning. It was a common occurrence, but the shame of it grew upon Victoria. She had tried everything to reform, to remove the passion from him. Everything had failed. She saw nothing in the way of hope except a complete change of life. She could not endure it much longer. She and Victor had a hurried and meager breakfast and then Victoria, leaving the father to sleep himself sober, went off to see her one great friend Aura and play to her a little while.

Aura was a crippled invalid. It was perhaps because



she lacked all the strong, healthy, iron-nerved qualities of Victoria that Victoria had caught the poor bruised, broken body up into her friendship and poured out on her what she never gave any other of her few acquaintances. She lived only a few blocks away, with her aunt who had brought her into the city at the time of the accident which crippled her, and still kept her there for medical treatment. The two girls were the same age. It was Victoria's custom to come in nearly every morning and play a little while. Music to the invalid was rest to tired nerves and aching limbs.

She greeted Victoria this morning with a feeble cry of congratulations.

"See! Aunt has been reading me the account of the concert last night. How proud you must be. And Victor too."

"I haven't seen the paper," replied Victoria coloring with real pleasure. "What does it say?"

Aura's aunt came in. "It says you and Victor are the finest, best player and singer in the city. And a good deal more," she said.

"I suppose we shall not hear you very much more?" said Aura, with a wistful glance at the violin case as Victoria placed it in a chair while she laid aside her wraps.



"Why not?" she asked, as she came up to the bed and stroked the invalid's fingers between her own supple hands.

"Because you will play for a large salary now," said Aura simply.

"As if that would make any difference here, Aura. You know I shall always play for you."

"Will you? How good you are. But I shall lose you now, I'm afraid."

Victoria took out the violin, and as she tuned it she said earnestly,

"Aura, I promise you I shall always regard my engagement here with you as sacred. You know you can always send for me at any time and I shall come. And as for the salary—wait—"

Victoria smiled and at once began to play. The effect on the invalid was instantaneous. She grew quiet and lapsed into a sort of trance. Victoria played for ten minutes. At the end of that time the doctor came and Victoria went away feeling restless and weary herself this morning as if something important were about to happen.

When she reached home she found two men in the dining room which was sitting room, reception room, and parlor as well, talking with Victor. Victor,



whose manner betrayed excitement introduced the strangers.

"They have come from the music committee of John King's church to know if I can be engaged to sing there next Sunday or for the winter," said Victor with little attempt to conceal his satisfaction at the offer.

"We regard your brother's voice as remarkable," said the gentlemen. "We know he would prove very acceptable to the church at this time."

Victoria had not thought of a church in connection with Victor's voice. She had thought of him as going into concert work. But the more she thought of it the more she liked it. When the gentlemen finally went away they made an agreement with Victor to sing for the next month in John King's church as solo singer at a price that even Victoria thought was liberal.

Victor was jubilant. "Think of that, Vi! In John King's church too! It's the finest place in the city. The largest audiences and the most cultured people!"

"It's good," said Victoria seriously. She did not say much. Matters were turning out as she hoped. The concert was bearing fruit. She was glad for Victor. Only she wondered if she would have any offer. Victor did not seem to think of her. Then she felt ashamed of her



selfishness and tried to enter into Victor's plans and ambitions as he talked over his prospects.

In the afternoon she was sitting alone in the room, Victor and the father both having gone out, when a messenger boy brought a note. She eagerly opened it and read:

To Miss Victoria Stanwood,

Dear Miss Stanwood:

I very much regret my inability to call in person and see you with reference to a possible engagement in the New Concert Company, of which you have doubtless heard and of which I am at present the manager. If you could find it convenient to call at my office, (here followed street and number) at 3 o'clock this afternoon I shall be pleased to see you and arrive at some agreement. I regret that my business will take me out of the city for two months and I am obliged to leave at 4 P. M. If any arrangement is made by which you become a member of the company it is very important that it be made at once and quite necessary to complete the terms before I leave the city. I can explain this to you. Trusting I may have the great pleasure of an interview with you at the designated time. I am very truly, — ———

Here followed the name of one of the most famous musical directors and managers of Concert Companies in the country.

Victoria looked at the clock. It was half past two already. She would have plenty of time to walk leisurely to the office. But she would go out doors and walk off her excitement by going around a longer way. She put on her hat and cloak and had reached the door when a boy came running up the steps and handed her



a note. She opened it hastily. It was written by Aura's aunt and read,

My Dear Victoria:

Since you left us this morning, Aura has had a bad attack like the one you saw two weeks ago. She calls incessantly for you. Can you come at once and bring your violin? She is partly unconscious but I think the music will quiet her. Hastily,

Mrs. Sutton.

Victoria read the note twice. Then she looked at the other note from the musical manager. It was now nearly a quarter of three. She would have just time to get to the office. But what about Aura? As she hesitated on the steps, Victor and her father turned the corner and came up.



## CHAPTER II.



ICTORIA was on the point of showing the two notes to Victor and the father and asking their advice as to her right course of action. But obeying an instant impulse, she suddenly thrust the note out of sight under her cloak and going down past Victor and the father just as they reached the foot of the steps she told them hurriedly that she was going for a short walk.

"Let me go with you," said Victor, stopping her.

"No! no! I prefer to go alone!" replied Victoria a little sharply. She walked off rapidly, leaving Victor and her father standing by the steps looking after her.

She was excited out of her usual quiet demeanor. Her ambition to secure a good position at good pay, especially in a first class concert company, and her friendship for Aura, coupled with her promise made only that morning, were the opposite desires that clashed in her heart and mind as she walked hurriedly along. What should she do? If she went to Aura she would miss seeing the manager. That would mean the



probable loss of the best offer likely to come to her. The season was late for new people to get positions. Then on the other hand if she went to the manager's office first what would Aura's aunt say, or what would she herself think, remembering her sacred promise to come at any time? All this whirled through her mind as she walked the distance of a block. Aura lay partly unconscious and suffering in the next block. The manager's office was four blocks in the other direction.

As Victoria reached the corner where she must decide one way or the other, she suddenly became conscious of the fact that she did not have her violin with her. If she was going to Aura to play for her, she must run back home and get her instrument. She turned about at the corner, and as she did so her eyes caught sight of a new play bill-board near by. It was an announcement of a grand concert to be given under the management of a great leader. Several of the players' and singers' names were printed in large letters. Victoria read them and then almost as if walking in her sleep she stepped down off the walk and crossed the street, going in the direction of the manager's office. She tried to answer the rebuke of her heart by saying, "I must secure this position. The business will not take long, I know. Then I will fly back and be in time



to play for Aura. Besides, her aunt is apt to get nervous without reason. I am sure I shall be in time to do all that Aura wants. And if she knew of the opportunity, she would be the first one to say, 'By all means secure the place before you come to me.' "

So Victoria quieted her conscience as she drew near the office of the manager. She was far from happy, however. And as she entered the room she could not crowd down a feeling that she had been false to the duties of friendship.

The manager was evidently waiting for her. He rose as she entered, and bowed with much civility.

"Miss Stanwood?" he inquired and in response to her "Yes, sir," he asked her to be seated and at once proceeded to question her as to her musical education, the extent of her studies, and the possibility, in case they arrived at satisfactory terms, of her going upon the road at once with the company. Victoria's answers were apparently satisfactory. She replied briefly and exactly. Her mind was full of Aura. She felt as if she must hurry to her. The manager then made her a proposition.

"We have not arranged the terms, Miss Stanwood," he said with a smile. "But suppose I should say seventy-five dollars a week for the season."



Victoria caught her breath. Seventy-five dollars a week! Why it was a fortune to begin with.

The manager went on blandly. "You of course to provide for your own traveling expenses out of that amount. Our circuit this winter does not include very many long distance stands."

Victoria bowed and said something about being satisfied with the terms.

"By the way," continued the manager, "I have not heard you play. I am taking you on the recommendation of some friends of mine who were present at the concert last night. Would you mind favoring me here with something?"

"I did not bring my violin," replied Victoria.

"I think we can provide for that oversight," said the manager.

He went over to a corner of the room and opened a small secretary with a glass door and took out a violin and bow which had evidently been very carefully put away. He brought them to Victoria and as he handed them to her, he said,

"There, Miss Stanwood, is one of the few genuine Cremonas in this country. That was a gift to me direct from Camilla Urso on her last appearance in the United States. There are a hundred triumphs



lingering in the musical memories of that old instrument."

Victoria seized the precious instrument with quivering delight. For the time being she forgot Aura and everything else except the keen pleasure of handling such an instrument. She had once had in her hands at one of the parlor musicals a Stradivarius loaned her by an old musician but she had never seen a Cremona and the thought of playing on one brought the fire to her cheek and her eye. At first she had shrank at the idea of playing alone to one person and that person the critical director and manager. But the minute her fingers closed over the neck of the famous violin she was all musician. What difference did it make to her who was present, whether one man or a city full? She quickly tuned the instrument and after a few preliminary chords, as one would stroke a pet horse before mounting to take a morning ride over the prairie, she swung into Paganini's "Witch Dance," at one time considered to be so impossible to perform technically that very few had mastered it successfully. Victoria had learned it and she played it with a fire and almost fury that gave the manager, as he sat back in his easy chair looking and listening sharply, great inward satisfaction. When she had finished he applauded her.



"Bravo!" he cried. Then rose and with old time politeness, bowed profoundly. Victoria flushed with pleasure. It was another triumph for her. Just then a clock in the room chimed with a deep echo the half hour. Half past three and—*Aura!* She must be getting away.

The manager after the first burst of enthusiasm, sat down and with business directness wrote out the contract binding Victoria at the price he had offered, to become a member of the Company which began its winter's course a week from date. Victoria was given all necessary details as to rehearsals and dates and places of performance, and then the manager with the courtesy for which he was famous at that time wrote out a check for the first week's salary. His quick eye had detected the signs of genteel economy in Victoria. His long experience told him the rest.

All this took time and when Victoria rose to go it was almost four o'clock. She started to go out, still holding the violin which she had not relinquished after playing. She came back into the middle of the room with a confused apology and laid the instrument down on the table. The manager hesitated curiously,—then he said—

"Miss Stanwood, how would you like to play that violin this winter?"



The color rushed to Victoria's brow. She was all musician again. There was no Aura in her thoughts any more.

"I do not need to say that I would look upon such a possibility as a wonderful privilege."

"Well, I never let it go out of my hands before. But you deserve the best instrument to be found. I'll tell you what I'll do. You may take the violin for the season. I'll risk it with you. Yes, you may take it along now. Here is the case." He took it out of the same secretary, and Victoria, placing the precious instrument in its cover, walked out of the office, almost as proud as if she had been given the violin to keep for her own.

The minute the door closed behind her, some dropping curtains at the farther end of the room parted and eight or ten persons came into the office.

"What did you think of it?" asked the manager briefly.

The answers were varied. Yet all agreed that the manager had secured a prize. Three or four of the group, all of whom had been present in the adjoining room by request of the manager, to hear Victoria, were members of the company. The rest were old musicians, friends of the manager who had not heard Vic-



toria the night before. The effect of Victoria's playing was noticeably marked. The manager had secured an audience all unknown to her and he congratulated himself over the little device. It was with much satisfaction that he dwelt upon the coming concert season.

Victoria almost ran out of the office entry and once on the sidewalk she walked as fast as she could without running. The excitement of her interview with the manager had given way now to a growing feeling of remorse. It was nearly an hour and a half since she had received the note from Aura's aunt. What should she tell them was the reason she had not come at once? Well, she would tell the truth, she said to herself. She would not add falsehood to her remorse. At any rate she would save a little time by not having to go around home to get her instrument. She had the Cremona. She would play that.

As she ran up the steps of the house she noticed the doctor's buggy in front. The door was opened for her by Mrs. Sutton who had seen her coming.

At sight of the aunt's face, Victoria trembled and fell back against the door.

"How is Aura?—Is she"—the word "dead" trembled on her lip. Mrs. Sutton shook her head. "No, but the attack was worse than we supposed. We do not know



what to expect. Didn't you get my note? I was just on the point of sending again. Aura has spoken your name every few minutes."

Victoria covered her face with her hand. What could she say? It was no time to make excuses. Mrs. Sutton touched her on the shoulder. "Come in and see her," she said. And Victoria rose and went into Aura's room.

The doctor was there with the nurse. As Victoria came in and softly walked up to the bed, Aura opened her eyes and saw her. A smile passed over her wan face. "O, you have come! I knew you would keep your promise to come any time. It did not take you long. You must have run. How good you are!"

All this spoken in whispers showed that the mind of the invalid had not been conscious of the lapse of time between the writing of the note and Victoria's appearance. It all went to Victoria's heart with a stab. She choked and for answer laid her hand on Aura's.

"You brought your violin. You will play to me now?"

Victoria looked at the doctor. "It won't do any harm," he said. "May result in real good. An hour ago would have been better."

So Victoria, heavy-hearted, feeling like one who had



betrayed the tenderest soul and been false to the highest call of duty, took out the Cremona and played. She hardly knew what. She tried to play one of the old tunes. She thought it must sound very dull and discordant. Aura lay very quiet. Victoria played on. When she finally stopped, the pale lips parted and whispered, "So good of you to come as you promised."

They were the last conscious words spoken by the poor sufferer. She grew weaker as night came on, rallied once or twice as darkness settled over the city, opened her eyes once more and smiled near midnight and between two and three in the morning she passed out of the life that now is, into the life which is to come.

And Victoria sat through all the agony of the night, her sensitive soul hurt and torn by the passion of her remorse. She had sent word over to the father and Victor and then remained by Aura until the last breath. Perhaps the greatest pang she had, lay in the thought that she had not been able to confess to Aura the exact truth. Her burden was so heavy on her that she sobbed out her story to Mrs. Sutton while the two were alone for a little while in the other room. The aunt tried to comfort her.

"I am sure, yes, I know Aura would have felt sorry if you had not gone. She was so eager for you to suc-



ceed. She would not have exacted the promise from you. You are too sensitive. You wrong yourself."

"No, no!" cried Victoria. "I am sure I do not. But I can never forgive myself for the selfishness of my act. And it is too late now for Aura to know." That was the heart of her grief. That if she had gone at once to her friend without the loss of that precious hour, she might have carried with her all her life a peaceful conscience at the thought of duty exactly performed, of promises literally fulfilled.

She crept home in the early grey of the morning and after a little she fell asleep and did not awake until noon. But she felt the mark of that night's experience on her as long as she lived. After the simple funeral service two days later she had come home and gone up into her room and there kneeling down she prayed—it was not her custom—and that in itself was a new experience. She prayed that she might live to be a noble woman to do unselfish deeds and leave a memory of kindly acts. The prayer brought her real peace. And then as she thoughtfully took up her instrument, she made a promise to the memory of her dear friend that she would use her skill and power with the violin to bless the world and not for selfish ends. Ah, Victoria, you are a woman now! Do you know what



that promise means? The world is very large and there is great sorrow and need, and fame is a very pleasant thing. God help you to be true to your memory and the pledge you have made to it.

When Sunday came she went to John King's church to hear Victor sing. It was the last Sunday she would have with him for many days as she would go out of the city that week with the Company. Victor was excited but confident.

"I have rehearsed with the organist three times," he said to Victoria as they went in together. "It's a magnificent organ and the room is beautifully constructed for singing."

Victoria felt a little impatient with Victor's egotism this morning. Since Aura's death many things appeared different to her.

"Isn't the room beautifully constructed for preaching, too? I had an idea that was partly what churches were built for. To hear you talk one would think the chief end of churches was to listen to tenor solos."

"Why, Vi," said Victor with open-eyed surprise "What's the matter? Don't you want me to sing? Isn't that what you are going for this morning? To hear me?"



"No," said Victoria somewhat slowly. "I am going to hear John King preach."

Victor said nothing and they walked on. Finally he burst out,

"Well, I call that encouraging! Here is the very thing happening that you wanted. I've got a splendid position and you take the heart all out of a fellow—"

"No! no!" Victoria cried in real distress, laying her hand on her brother's arm. "I am sorry. I am proud and glad. I did not mean to hurt you, dear. I only meant—" She hesitated and Victor said good naturedly, "you only meant that you preferred John King's preaching to my singing. That's all right. But wait until I've been singing as long as he has been in the pulpit and then see—" Victor elevated his chin and walked on complacently and Victoria smiled at his boundless vanity albeit she sighed a little, too, as she seriously thought of the approaching separation from him when he would be left practically all alone to work out his career for himself.

When they reached the church she spoke a word of loving encouragement and sympathy to him and he went around to the organist's door with a smile of satisfaction on his eager young face, while she went in and was shown to a seat quite well up in front, and as it



was very early, she sat for several minutes with the great church softly quiet about her, her mind filled with Aura, with the promise to her memory, with the coming week, and its new life to her, with the father and with Victor, and then, as the church began rapidly to fill up, with his voice and its great possibilities.

The service began and she was lifted up by it. Worship was a part of the service in John King's church. Something at the very beginning struck the chord that vibrated with her late experience helpfully and went to swell the tide of her better emotions and open the view upon her own responsibilities. The service grew in helpfulness as it went on. Victor was to sing after the sermon. That was John King's arrangement. He believed in music as a power to sway hearts and make men lead better lives. And he very often wanted his spoken truth to go home to his hearers winged with harmony.

One or two points in the sermon came very near to Victoria's thought this particular morning. She was not in the habit of attending church. She often went out into one of the parks with Victor or else spent the day with her music at home or with some musical acquaintance. The old truths came to her as she sat in the church this time with a new and thoughtful mean-



ing. The text was one that remained with her all through her professional career.

"Give, and it shall be given unto you."

"The law of give and get," said the preacher, "runs all through life everywhere. It is true of the natural world, the business world, the spiritual world. Jesus simply announced a great and eternal law when he said that if a man expects to get he must give. Nature is always lavish with its sowing of germ life. I counted one hundred and fifty seeds, last summer, in the ripened pod of one little modest wild plant growing with a hundred others on the prairie. By the profusion with which plant and animal life reproduces itself, nature responds to the great law of giving with a hand that never shuts, in astonishing liberality. In honest business, with rare exceptions, it is the enterprise and liberality of large expenditure that brings back a corresponding return. In spiritual things the same law holds good. Men never grow better by means of selfish nursing of their virtues but always by the giving out of all that is best in them for the good of others. Especially is this true in the case of some talent or gift greater than ordinary. Ole Bull the great violinist once said, 'If I do not practice on my instrument for twenty four hours I notice a loss in skill, and if I let forty-eight hours go by without



practicing my friends notice it, and if I should not practice for three days the public would notice it.' It was only by giving his time and his strength and his energy and his desire to the accomplishment of his purpose that the great violinist could get the world's applause or gain its affection. If any soul anywhere in this audience is hungry for righteousness it will be filled. But it must hunger. God does not fill any soul with Himself unless that soul has emptied itself, has sacrificed, given up its pride and deceit and everything that it once held close to itself. Nothing worth having is ever gained without sacrifice. There must always be a giving up in order to get anything worth having back again. If the farmer would have a crop he must give his seed grain. He must throw it into the ground. If he sells it or eats it he will have nothing when harvest time comes. If the man of business would have, he must put his money to use, he must give to trade or to ventures of commerce his capital or he will have no more than he holds, and if he lives off his capital he will grow poorer every day. In the building of character the same great law is found. We live and grow by what we sacrifice. He that loseth his life shall find it. Give and it shall be given unto you. Give kindly thoughts and loving deeds to the sorrowing and the



despairing and you will get happiness. Give love in return for hate and you will get the peace of God. Give your talent to make the world better and you will get daily joy in the sweet consciousness of using a God-given power in a God-given way. He who never gives either of his means or his time, or best of all, himself, to lift the world nearer into the light of eternal things, never knows the pleasure of getting. For getting is always dependent on giving. What can we give this morning to Him who gave His life a ransom for many? If we have nothing to give but ourselves, that may be the most precious gift of all. 'A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.' And then once given back, into the life will flow the sweet waters of the River of God's peace, worth more than wealth or fame or anything that earth can give. 'Give and it shall be given unto you.' This is the divine law of compensation. This is the great law of sacrifice, the end of which is Paradise and not Calvary."

The preacher ceased suddenly as his habit was, and Victor rose to sing. His solo was a new rendering of music with the old words,

"I gave my life for thee,  
What hast thou given to Me?"

Victor had not been in the habit of singing religious



music. Victoria wondered, as she listened with tears in her eyes, where the boy had found the experience that made him capable of singing such words in such an impressive way. The audience sat stilled and at the same time stirred by the pathos of the song. Many of those present had attended the concert. Over the congregation passed the tones clear, thrilling, in persuasion, entreaty, tenderness. Into the hearts of many, the thought passed through the medium of that wonderful power of music, "What have I given to the great Redeemer who gave all?" Surely Victor was preaching the sermon over again with redoubled power. When he ended, the prayer that followed brought the service tenderly, quietly, impressively to a close. And the great audience, after remaining seated while the choir sang softly the amen, rose and went away, talking, as they went, about the new tenor and his remarkable voice.

Victoria lingered, waiting for Victor, who at the close of the song had stepped back into the music room behind the organ. As he came out to join Victoria he met John King close by the steps leading down from the platform to the floor of the audience room.

King shook hands and said something to Victor but Victoria was too far away to hear. The two finally



came down the platform steps together and as they came down the aisle to where Victoria stood, Victor introduced her.

"I am glad to see you two together," said John King in his wholesome manner. "I had the great pleasure of hearing you both at the concert last week. Your brother tells me you are going away this week. You will be able to do great service with such a gift." He paused a moment, looking earnestly and thoughtfully at the twins as they stood together, then added, "I am very glad that your brother will remain with us, Miss Stanwood. I have just been asking him to become a member of our Question Class. It meets at my house every Monday night. He has not promised me that he will come. I wish you would use your influence with him."

"What is the 'Question Class?'" asked Victoria.

"It's for those who come to find out. There! I'll leave it mysterious. Come tomorrow, young man, unless you are too busy helping your sister off on her travels. Yes, you will be, that's so. Say a week from tomorrow then. You'll be lonesome and need some friends. Come around." They were all outside the church now. John King went the other way. He shook hands as if he meant it, wished Victoria a thoughtful good by and with the hope that she would



make the most of her life gift for the world's good, went away, leaving the twins looking after him and quite won to him by his simple unassuming manner.

"What was he saying to you, Vic, up on the platform?"

"He was inviting me to join the Question Class," replied Victor. He did not say any more and they walked on a little distance in silence. Finally Victor broke it by saying, "How did the singing sound? Was it all right?"

"You did beautifully. I could hear the words very distinctly. The room is perfect for singing."

Victor looked gratified. "Yes, I told you so. Do you think the people were satisfied?"

"Vanity of vanities, thy name is Victor," said Victoria. "Why do you ask? Couldn't you see that the people were under the influence? What did John King say? Did he compliment you?"

"No," said Victor shortly. "He never said a word. I thought he was going to but he didn't. He's queer sometimes, don't you think?"

Victoria laughed. Then she sighed. At that moment they overtook a group of people, among them two young women acquaintances and the latter at once began to praise Victor.



"O, Mr. Stanwood, it was simply lovely. We shall go to John King's church every Sunday now."

"Will you?" Victor was at once basking in the sunshine of the adoration he hungered for. He lingered with the group until Victoria impatiently took his arm and drew him on.

"Come, Victor," she said when out of ear shot. "Don't let those girls make a fool of you. I have no patience with their gabble."

Victor looked a little annoyed. Then he laughed. "Well, Vi, they can't make a fool of me if I am one already, can they? And that's what you think, I know."

Victoria protested and by the time they reached home they were at peace with each other and Victor was complacently humming over the morning solo as he went up to his room.

The week that followed was a busy one for Victoria. She had to prepare for her departure. It was a serious time in her life. She dreaded the thought of leaving Victor and the father alone. A competent servant had to be secured. Then she charged Victor with a hundred commands for the care of everything. She had never left her father before. That gave her the greatest anxiety. The future was full of possibilities for her and



she did not lack courage, but what Victor would do, how he would assume the duties of manhood fast confronting him, was an unknown factor in the problem. She had all this to think about as she made her preparations. The life she was about to enter was full of unknown things. She felt equal to the professional part of it and when the day of her departure arrived she bade good by to the father bravely, only weeping a little after she turned away from him. Victor went to the station with her.

"After all, dear Vic, we shall not be so very far away. Our longest run is only 500 miles. And we play tomorrow in D. you know. You won't forget all my instructions, will you? And accept John King's invitation for Monday. I want you to know him. It will be worth everything to have such a man's friendship. And above all, don't, don't go and fall in love with those Caxton girls you were talking with Sunday."

"You mean the ones that talked what you called 'gabble?' "

"Yes, I'm glad to see you remember so well. Be a good boy now, won't you? Remember what we have at stake, to rise above our—"

Victor understood Victoria meant the disgrace of the father's condition. He grew unusually thoughtful.



When he kissed Victoria good by, the tears came. He was a boy yet. She saw him turn as the train rolled out of the station and in his tear-blinded condition he stumbled into a man on the platform who knocked off his hat and the last glimpse Victoria caught of the brother as she looked back out of the window was a picture of him carefully brushing the dust from his hat with the anxiety for outside adornment that was peculiar to him in such a marked degree. And then the train carried her off into her new world. And Victor went home to face his new existence. And for both of them the days to come opened up and unrolled for them the life that now is, with a rapidity and reality that they could not understand at the time because much of it all was so new, so serious, and so profound with meaning.

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### CHAPTER III.

**T**HE week that followed Victoria's departure passed very dolefully for Victor. The twins had never been separated before and he did not know what to do without her. He had never been able, at least he always believed he never had been able, to endure with any patience his father's ways and yet he had never been undutiful or lacking in love towards him. With Victoria gone it was different. Victor busied himself with his music as much as possible. When Sunday came he went to the church and sang. There was an immense congregation. He was nervous and impatient all through the sermon which seemed to him longer than usual. Several times he went back into the music room behind the organ. There was a curtain behind the pulpit arranged so that a person could come in and out of the music room unperceived by the congregation. Victor did not care anything for the service except his own part in it. When at last the sermon closed and the organist began the prelude to his song he came out from the shadow of the curtain. His appearance almost pro-



voked applause. If it had been anywhere except in church and John King's church at that, it seems almost as if he would have been cheered. His pale, finely-moulded face, the head covered with its curly black hair, the boyish yet musically mature countenance produced the impression of genius on the audience. And Victor's voice! It certainly was remarkable. John King sat with bowed head, thrilled with its tone, saying to himself, "What a power!" After the service was over he saw Victor and reminded him of the Monday night Question Class.

"Come around and join us for the evening, at any rate."

"I don't know," Victor hesitated. He was shy about going out or meeting new people. But he was lonesome and he remembered Victoria's parting words. So he promised to come and the next evening when he rang the bell at Plane Street he was ushered into a room half full of young men and women to whom John King began to introduce him.

"This is Richard Bruce, Mr. Stanwood. And here is Mr. Howard. Tom and Dick, you give Stanwood a chance to know some of the class. I have a little work to do in my study while the rest are coming in. Excuse me for a few minutes."



So Tom took Victor in hand and introduced him to several young men and women in a very informal off-hand manner. Every one was talking and laughing socially and Tom soon sat down with Victor in a corner by a table of portraits and chatted with him in his gossipy way.

"You're the new tenor at John King's church, aren't you?"

Victor nodded pleasantly.

"I heard you at the concert two weeks ago. It's a wonderful voice you have. I'd give my other hand almost to be able to sing like that." Victor noticed then that Tom's right hand was gone. He didn't know whether he ought to say anything about it but Tom frankly spoke of it.

"You see I lost this hand three years ago in a little scrimmage. Not foot ball but while engaged in the gentle business of teaching a Kindergarten school in one of John King's pet slums near Clark street. Dick was with me that night. Bruce; you know him?"

"Yes, I've heard of him. He has written several books, hasn't he? I remember seeing one of his serials in the 'Monthly Visitor.'" Victor read very little but he had seen that particular magazine.

"Yes," replied Tom. "Dick is a rising author. It's



slow work though. And there's no money in it. Now I suppose music is more—more remunerative, isn't it?" inquired Tom, with his old reporter's instinct for news.

Victor smiled. He took to Tom already because Tom appeared inclined to pump him in regard to his musical talent. And he had not the least reserve about telling how much he received for singing.

"I get fifteen dollars a Sunday now. I expect more next month."

Tom looked at him seriously and suddenly changed the conversation.

"You haven't been here before, have you?"

"No. I do not even know what it is I have come to."

"You'll find out pretty soon. John King will be down in a few moments. Don't you know any one here?"

"There's Miss Lester. I have met her at musicals. I don't see any one else. Who is the girl talking with Mr. Bruce?"

"That's Miss Kenneth. She's an artist. She illustrates magazine stories."

"Who is the young lady just beyond her, by the piano?"



"That's one of John King's cousins from the east, Mary King. She is studying medicine, I believe. That other girl just coming towards her is Miss Fergus. You were introduced to her."

"What is she? Every one here seems to belong to some art or profession," said Victor with a smile.

"Oh, Miss Fergus? She is just a society girl. She hasn't any object in life except to see how much fun she can get out of it."

Tom pulled up short and a curious look came on his face. He bit his lips and laying his hand on Victor's arm he said, "I take that back. It was an ungracious thing to say. I was guilty of judging. I had no right to do it. I haven't been a Christian very long and the old Adam runs my tongue a good deal. I hope you won't remember my remark."

Victor looked and felt embarrassed. He did not know what to say. He was not a Christian himself and was not in the habit of hearing anything religious spoken in such a frank open way. Before he could say anything, Miss Fergus came across the room and straight up to Tom.

"Mr. Howard, you have been saying something about me, now honor bright, isn't that so?"



Victor expected Tom to deny it. To his astonishment Tom replied,

“Yes, I’m sorry to say I did make a remark about you that I had to apologize for to Mr. Stanwood here. You have met him?”

“Yes, but you don’t tell what the remark was.”

Again Victor expected Tom to say something different but Tom replied quietly, “I said that you were without any object in life except to see how much fun you could get out of it, but I had no right to say it and I apologize to you, Miss Fergus, same as I did to Mr. Stanwood.”

“You don’t need to apologize; it’s the truth, isn’t it?” Miss Fergus laughed and Victor could not detect any sign of displeasure or resentment.

“It’s a great pity if it is true,” said Tom seriously.

“Do you think so?” asked Miss Fergus, laughing again.

“I don’t see how any person can live in these times without—”

“Well, without what?” asked Miss Fergus good naturedly, as Tom hesitated for the right phrase.

“Why, without having a larger object in life than going to parties and having a good time. That’s what so many girls seem to live for. They don’t even deny



themselves or do anything that gives them any trouble for the sake of the poor or the sick or the sinful."

"Do you know a good many girls of that kind?" Miss Fergus put the question with a quick glance at Victor to see if he was listening. Victor was listening carefully.

"No," replied Tom with a laugh. "I don't know very many. It's what I hear and see that makes me judge. But there! I ought not to judge on such superficial evidence. I don't want to get into a discussion. Miss Fergus, you accept my apology, don't you?"

"I will take it under consideration. Here comes John King. He has an object in life anyway. But we can't all be like him."

"No danger," muttered Tom as Miss Fergus moved over to another part of the room. If there was anything that Tom scorned it was a person with nothing particular in the world to do except dress and have a good time. Victor remembered the little scene long afterwards when other events gave it larger meaning.

As the preacher came into the room he called out good humoredly, but strongly. "Eight o'clock. Time for business."

The laugh and chatter ceased and everyone sat



down. John King produced a box which he opened and took out one at a time slips of paper with questions written on them.

The plan of the Question Class was something like this. At each meeting the members of the class handed in written questions which were answered at the next meeting a week later. The largest liberty was granted in the matter of questions. All sorts of subjects were taken up. Questions on politics, society, history, language, literature, science, local affairs, moral perplexities, in short, anything of real interest in human life especially when the thing in question was conduct or action for right or wrong. Most of the class were older than Victor. The questions were those which young men and women from nineteen to twenty-four might easily ask. The class had been started by John King as an experiment. He found the interest in it grew as years went on and the value of it was very great to certain minds. There were a few simple rules regulating the details of the class. Each member was allowed to ask but one question a week. That must be written out and left at John King's until the next meeting. This gave him an opportunity to look them over. The writer of each question signed his or her name but it was very seldom revealed by the preacher when the answer was given.



The list of questions this evening covered a wide range of subjects. Some were literary, some scientific, one or two political, but it was noticeable that most of them were related to conduct. After all, the class had learned that the most real help came to them along that line. We will listen with Victor to some of the questions and answers as John King takes them out of the box and reads. He sat down, talking informally as at a gathering where all were entirely at home for mutual help.

“‘Is it possible to be equally good at all times and in all places?’ I mean by my question this. Is it meant that we shall be in the same state of mind while buying and selling goods or carrying on the details of a profession as while offering a prayer or teaching a Sunday School class?”

John King looked around and smiled in the direction of the author of the question and the Class came very near guessing who he was, although there were half a dozen members who might have asked it.

“There is a verse in the New Testament that covers the answer to this question. It is this; ‘Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.’ That is very plain. That covers buying and selling and trades and professions and politics



and home life and society and everything. It is no doubt harder to feel good and devout and prayerful in the world rubbing up against sinful people and all sorts of dishonesty and hypocrisy than while sitting in a prayer meeting, in a church service, or teaching a Sunday School class. But because a thing is hard is no sign that it cannot be done and no excuse why it should not be done. The growth of character is a conflict. If it was all easy and no fight at all there would be no such thing as overcoming. And the Bible has a great deal to say about overcoming. This question is one which at the present time raises a great deal of discussion. There are some men who say religion has no place in politics, that you cannot mix business and religion, that the only way to do is to let religion work in its place and politics and business work in their place. Then there is no trouble and everything goes along lovely. Remember that is what the politicians and the men of the world want. They do not want the moral element introduced into their selfish schemes for making money or hating their enemy or rising to power over the ruins of the weaker. But this is the very essence of Christianity, that it stamps every act and every profession and every detail of government with the command 'Do all to the glory of God.'



“Yes, I answer this question by saying it is possible to be equally good at all times, in all places, in all professions that are honest, in all trades that are honorable. And it is the teaching of Christ that we should be doing everything to His glory whether we teach a Sunday School class or conduct a lawsuit, collect a bill or cook a dinner or preach a sermon or pray by the side of the dying or learn a hundred lines of Virgil or Ovid. Whatsoever we do, we are to do all to the glory of God. It will require a great deal of prayer and talking with God and study of His truth and keeping very close to the divine all the time. Indeed that is the only way the higher life can be lived. Don't forget the words of Christ, ‘In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer I have overcome the world.’ And as He overcame, so can we, and glorify the Father in heaven with every breath we draw, with every deed we do.”

Question. “I have been praying for several weeks for a certain thing. It has not been given me. What shall I do? Stop praying because I have not received what I pray for, or keep on asking until I get it?”

“That depends on what the thing is. And also on what you want it for. If you had stated what it was—”



A voice from a girl in the corner of the room at John King's left called out, "It's a piano!" There was a laugh but John King sat with unmoved face as he turned in the direction of the speaker who in her absorption with her thought had betrayed the authorship of the question. She was one of the youngest persons in the class and one of the poorest.

"Grace," said John King, "How long have you been praying for a piano?"

"About two months. I've wanted one for two years but never prayed for one until lately."

"How do you pray? I mean what words do you use?"

"Why, I say every night and every morning 'Dear Lord, I want a piano the worst kind. Won't you put it into the heart of some one to give me one or else help me to make enough money to buy one?'"

The Class laughed again but John King's face was sober.

"If some one should give you a piano, would you consider that God had answered your prayer?"

"Of course. But I haven't the least idea that any one will."

This time John King smiled a little. "Grace, what would you do with a piano if you did get one?"



Grace opened her eyes at the simple question.

"Why, play on it, of course. I'm just aching for a chance to catch up with the girls who take music at the Conservatory. But I can't do a thing without practice and I can't get anything to play on but old Mrs. Wilson's tin pan of an instrument that was made over a hundred years ago. And there are girls in the Conservatory who have every chance in the world with all the best instruments and they don't seem to care anything about the privilege." Poor Grace was pouring out her trouble regardless of the class, some of whom laughed while others felt sorry for the frank impulsive confession of poverty.

John King was silent a minute. Then he said slowly;

"You have a perfect right to pray for the piano if you pray in the right spirit. But you have no right to think God does not hear you or care for your happiness if you don't get a piano. Perhaps there are other things more necessary for you than a piano. If you want it simply to become a better player than other girls, or to grow proud over your musical ability it would be a mercy if you never had your prayer answered literally. I should answer your question by saying, No, don't stop praying, but ask yourself are you praying



aright? In the right spirit. There is no promise in God's word that we shall get everything we ask for no matter how we ask for it. That is not the definition of prayer. A great many people think prayer is asking God for anything. That is not the teaching about prayer at all. We must never forget that every true prayer contains this sentence; 'Thy will be done.' Without that spirit of loving surrender to the will of our heavenly Father all our petitions to Him are powerless. True prayer is always 'Thy will be done.'"

Question.—"I have a boy in my Sunday School Class who I have lately discovered is beginning to read trashy books and stories. I have tried to get him interested in Scott and Cooper and Trowbridge. But he does not seem to care for any of those works. How can I get him to read good books?"

"Make him a present of a set of Trowbridge's stories for boys. Or make him subscriber for a year to some good magazine like St. Nicholas or Harper's Young People. Unless the boy is thoroughly bad in heart he will read what you give him in that way. Have a talk with the boy's mother and father. It is astonishing how some fathers neglect their boys in matters like these. The taste for reading which the boy acquires may determine his whole after life. Yet I have



known parents who let their boys read anything that came into the house, even the political daily papers," John King added with a glance at Tom. "There is this about it. Always love the boy and believe in getting hold of him. A good many boys go through a fit of reading dime novels and bloody stories about Indians and pirates and howling savages and burglars and detectives and all that tribe. It is a sort of boys' story-book-disease like measles and croup and chicken pox. I had it myself when I was a boy. Large doses of Scott and Dickens and Cooper and Victor Hugo cured me. Pray for your boy. Talk with him about good heroes of the world. Oh, there are a thousand things to do to win him to the better things of life and then ask God for wisdom to do the best thing yourself."

Question.—"How can a person best overcome the habit of saying unkind things of other people?"

"By not saying them. That is one way. Another way would be to apologize every time to the person who was hurt by the unkind saying. Very many people try to overcome some bad habit without thinking of the other people who are being hurt by it. They keep thinking all the time about themselves and how they can correct the habit all by themselves. The thought of the great harm done to others by evil habits ought



to act as a powerful impulse to correct bad habits. I knew a man who once cured himself of the habit of swearing by asking a man who worked in the same carpenter shop with him to hit him a smart blow over the knuckles with a foot ruler every time he spoke a hasty oath. At first there was almost a riot in the shop, for the man was mad at being hit, but his companion always shouted, 'You made me promise to do it.' And it cured him in time. What you need, however, is more divine help: You can't cure yourself of any fixed evil habit by your human power alone. What is the use of shutting God out any way, when you might just as well have his help in everything?"

Question.—"What would you advise a young man to do who feels himself falling in love with a nice girl and yet knows that it will be several years before he will be able financially to have a home of his own?"

There was a sensation all through the class as John King read this very frankly worded question and a little laugh which ceased the minute John King began to speak.

"Falling in love, young people, is just as much a part of human life as learning to talk or coming of age. It has always been so and will continue to be. I can't preach on this to-night; the subject is too large to dis-



cuss briefly, but I will say this in answer. It is easy to give advice, but there is no form of advice that is the same for all young men who feel themselves falling in love except this: if it is ever important that you do and be everything that is noble and true and manly and Christian it is when you begin to feel attached to some 'nice girl,' as our friend in his question calls her. Regulate your conduct at such a time, young man, by the highest, most thoughtful, most exalted rule of action. Perhaps your circumstances are such that you have no right to fall in love. There is also a sentiment, foolishly weak and sometimes wicked, yielding to passion, that deserves the righteous scorn and indignation of every man who has a particle of manhood in him. Some young men fall in love very easily and there is nothing very sacred in it to them. But let me tell you, dear young people, when you meet the 'nice girl' as the question puts it, who is all the world to you, for whom you feel able to do or be anything great, it will mean all the world to your happiness and manhood all through life if you are able to pray with one noble soul I once knew, — 'Gracious God, consecrate this great experience to me that from this mighty happiness I may become a nobler man, a better child of thine, a greater servant of the race.'



“It is hard for me to answer such a question as this. But there are always certain rules of conduct which never change. We never ought to place ourselves or others in positions where pain and sorrow and disappointment will result from a failure to check desires or emotions which under different circumstances would be entirely right and proper. In the light of truth and honor and nobility and everything else that is good, every young man must act in this, as in every other important experience of life and in this special experience, with even more than usual thoughtfulness and search for the divine wisdom. I have known happy marriages result after very brief engagements. There is no cast iron rule. There is only the eternal law of righteousness in all of life. It is because love and the period of love between young men and women has too often been held and treated lightly and jestingly, and without seriousness as a beautifully sacred event, that so much misery has come from the imitation of true love. True love always results in happiness. For it is always the reflection of the divine being. For God Himself is love. That is the best definition we have of Deity.

Question.—“Do you think there is any harm in a young man smoking a good cigarette?”

“I never heard of a *good* cigarette.”



Question.—“What are the worst faults in the young men of this age?”

“Now that,” said John King with a twinkle of his eyes, “is evidently a one sided question and I do not think it is fair to answer it and not say anything about the faults of young women. So we will pass it by.”

Question.—“What does the world need to-day more than anything else?”

“Now here is a good one to close with to-night. The world needs to-day more than anything else, men and women who love truth and hate falsehood. Young men and women who have a purpose in life and are not ashamed of it. Men and women who live so that the generation that comes after may bless and not curse, honor and not despise. What the world needs in this age is goodness that has an every-day market value to it. Yes, the world may seem to need very many things, but the first and greatest is manhood and womanhood that is pure and unselfish and large-hearted. Free from narrow prejudice and miserable hypocrisy. Ablaze with enthusiasm for the right, indignant with virtue at the wrong. Such manhood and womanhood as grows up out of knowledge of God and faith in the unseen and eternal things of God, faith in mother's prayers and in



all holy desires and noble aspirations to bless the world. That's what the old world needs to-day more than anything else."

John King closed suddenly, and offered a short prayer as he sat in the hush that followed, and after a brief social time the class went away.

As Tom stood by the door, he overheard Miss Fergus asking Grace to come over and play her piano any time she wanted to. He did not hear Grace's reply but thought from Miss Fergus' manner that her offer had not been accepted. "It was thoughtful in her to make the offer any way," Tom said to himself and he again took himself to task for his snap judgment of people's characters.

Victor went home very little impressed by anything he had heard. He enjoyed the admiration he had received from those who had heard him sing, but nothing had been said or done that interested him very much. The truth was he did not care much for other people. He lived in his music. The brief quarter of an hour when he stood up in the church and sang, was the one great event of the entire week now. A month went by and he did not go to John King's house again. King invited him heartily the first week after he failed to appear and then did not ask him again. Victor felt



hurt by his silence, although he had purposely stayed away. He also felt a strange sort of anger against King because he had never said a word in compliment of his singing. It seemed to him that there lay behind the silence on the part of the preacher, a reason that he did not want Victor to know. He fretted over it a good deal, not knowing anything of John King's conception of every part of the church service to glorify God and humble man. To Victor's mind the song service was the occasion for all the glorification he could get out of it. He lived on the thought of the emotion his voice could provoke in the people.

Meanwhile as days went by he had heard from Victoria. Not often, for she was living too intense and broken a life to write much. One of her letters about a month after her departure throws light on her career at that time.

Dear Vic:

Played last night in M. to a great audience. Very enthusiastic and I was recalled three times. It was very late when we closed. If it was not for my perfect health I could not endure such a life as I have had to live these last three weeks. We travel of course very much at night and I am broken of my rest. The seventy-five dollars is pretty well eaten into, what with hotels and travel and dress and all. I send you thirty-five dollars. Father said something in his last letter about the added expenses since I left. I hope, dear Vic, you will manage matters for him in a thoughtful, business-like way. You know he has no idea of the value of money. I do enjoy my life very much, after all. The public is kind and I have made friends with most of the



company. Madam Rene and myself are quite congenial to each other. There are many little annoyances of course, and sometimes I grow homesick for you and the old life. There is much that is seemingly artificial in this strange life. I think of you as making great progress with your voice. I hope you are getting a great deal from John King's friendship. Don't forget to write to me all about the Question Class.

Your loving sister, Victoria.

A month after the date of this letter Victoria was surprised to receive from Victor a short letter which read as follows:

Dear Vi:

I write to tell you that father has been ill again for a week. Nothing dangerous. But it has been an expensive illness and what with one thing and another, money has run short. The \$35 was very acceptable. If you could send me a little more very soon it would be a great help. I think if the church people do not offer me more pay at the end of my contract I shall leave. I have had an offer from the chorister of the Cathedral at St. Mark's Ave., and I am considering it. Don't worry about father. If you could send the money soon it would be a great help. Don't work too hard and get sick.

Lovingly, Victor.

There were several things in this letter that puzzled Victoria. How an illness of a week could be very expensive she did not see. And she did not realize how Victor could use so much money for household expenses. He was getting fifteen dollars a week. The father was earning eight or ten dollars more and she had sent on nearly seventy-five dollars since she left home. They had always lived simply and she could not account for the increased expenditure except by supposing that Victor in his vanity of appearance had



gone to a great outlay in the matter of clothes and especially of neckties, of which even in the old times he would get an unheard of quantity. She sighed as she thought of the money and then she reproached herself for being selfish and lovingly thought of Victor with much pride at his success. He had sent her some papers containing favorable notices of his singing and she had treasured them among her few letters.

She replied to his letter the next day, sending him every cent she could spare from her immediate needs and cautioning him lovingly about unnecessary expenditure.

Another month went by. And the last Sunday of Victor's engagement at John King's church was near at hand. The musical committee had tried to make arrangements with him to continue. He had asked for time to consider and had promised to give an answer on Saturday of that week. In the afternoon, one of the committee called by arrangement but Victor was not in and had not left any word. He did not appear all the afternoon and by ten o'clock at night had not come back to the house.

It was a little after 9 o'clock that same evening that Tom Howard, walking past John King's house, saw a



light burning up in the pastor's study. He walked past the house and slowly came back, hesitated a moment at the foot of the steps, then went up and rang the bell and inquired of the servant if he could see John King a few minutes.

The preacher heard his voice and came to the top of the landing.

"Come up, Tom, come up. I've got a plate of apples and some hickory nuts and we'll sit by the fire and discuss everything but politics."

Tom came up and sat down in front of the open grate fire but refused the proffered refreshment.

"What's the matter, Tom? Been stumbling over your tongue some more?"

"No," replied Tom with a faint smile. "This isn't my trouble, and I don't know as I ought to bring it to you. You have your share of burden bearing."

"Always room for one more. What is it, Tom?"

"Well, I feel as if you ought to know it. I was going by one of the Clark Street gambling house dens to-night and I saw young Victor Stanwood going in. Some one ought to know. His sister's out on the road with Minett's Company. I couldn't think of any one except you—and—"

Tom paused in great distress at the change that



came over King's face and manner. He asked a few questions in a low voice and after a little, Tom went down.

When he was gone, John King kneeled down and buried his head in the couch that stood in front of the fire. He knelt there until his lamp went out and the fire died down to a quiet bed of coals. When the clock in the church steeple struck twelve he was still there in the same position.

At the moment John King kneeled in his study with the burden of another soul on his heart, bearing it up before the great loving Father, asking for wisdom to act aright for its salvation, at that very moment in another city two hundred miles away, a slight determined figure came upon the stage and faced an immense audience of people as she raised her violin and drew the bow across it to play Carlovini's Angel's Prayer. As she touched the strings with the first movement of the music so pianissimo, so ecstatically, the people sat hushed in breathless quiet while a feeling of strange sadness stole into their hearts. They had never heard the violin played like that before. It was almost as if the sweet gentle rush of the angel's wings had been heard, as he folded them and knelt to pray the prayer of one who pleads with tears for eternal life, not for himself, but for a poor, lost, sinning human soul.



## CHAPTER IV.



SUNDAY morning dawned on the city with the promise of a perfect day. Never had John King's church seemed more crowded at a forenoon service. The news of the famous tenor voice which had been heard now for several weeks had reached people in the suburbs and the church was filled with strangers. The galleries overflowed. There was an eager air among the new comers.

John King came into the pulpit looking worn and sad. His night had been a night of vigil and the hours had been full of groaning anguish for sinful souls and especially for the one young soul who in a few minutes would be singing so wonderfully. That was a professional mystery to John King, that one who did not feel the glory of the redeemed could move the hearts of others by his rendering of words in music that were not true to his own inner life.

It was natural that the preacher's sermon this morning should be from the text "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost." John King's customary fiery eloquence was subdued. He spoke



slower, with even more feeling than usual. But when he finished and sat with bowed head during the singing of the solo, very few persons in the church guessed that his heart was groaning for the singer that he might be saved.

How strange it all seemed to John King that morning! What wonderful power the boy's voice had! Whether Victor knew what the subject of the sermon would be he could not tell. But there he stood singing,

"There were ninety and nine—"

Never had he sung with more pathos, more feeling. People who had sat cold and unmoved during the sermon felt the tears start and the heart thrill at the simple words of the song. The preacher writhed inwardly as he listened. The contest was sharp in him as to his duty. He prayed for help and when the service was over he went back into the music room.

Victor was there drawing on his gloves just getting ready to go out.

"Won't you wait a few moments, Stanwood? I want to see you."

Victor sat down wondering if John King was going to tell him how much he had enjoyed his singing.

"You must not think, my dear fellow," began John King with a hearty loving manner, "that I am inter-



fering with what is not my business, in speaking to you plainly about what has come to my knowledge. I am nearly twice as old as you are and have seen a good deal of the world, both its good and evil. I trust you will be as frank with me as I am with you for the sake of your sister, and—your profession.” The preacher added the last word slowly. Victor sat with his eyes on the carpet. He did not reply nor look up. John King took it for a bad sign, but went on.

“Is it true, my dear Stanwood, that you have recently been in the habit of frequenting the gambling places on Clark street, or was last Saturday your first visit to them?”

Victor turned deadly pale. His hands trembled. His lips quivered. Then a flush of anger came over his face. He lifted his eyes, looked King defiantly in the face and said,

“What business is that of yours?”

“Only the business of one who cannot endure to see such a life as yours lost in those hells. Think of your sister. Think of what you have at stake in using such a power as you possess to move humanity. You cannot afford to throw all this away in such a horrible manner. The gambling passion is death to all true life.”



King rose and went over and put his hand on Victor's shoulder.

"My boy, you have only had a taste of it yet. Choose to give it up now. Your career will be ruined, your sister's heart will be broken, there will be nothing for you in the future but sorrow and disgrace and shame if you let the gambling passion become your master."

"I can manage my own affairs. You needn't preach to me. To hear you talk one would think I was a drunken fool incapable of governing myself."

John King was silent now. His calm look gave way for an instant to one of indignation. That passed at once and nothing but sorrowful compassion looked out of his great dark eyes. He would not give up this soul yet.

Victor had started towards the door.

"Stanwood," the word came clear and steady while John King stood still without a motion to detain him. "Are you going to sing for us any more?"

"You would not care to have a professional gambler sing in your church," said Victor with a sneer.

"If you will sing for us, I will use my influence with the music committee to have your pay increased. I understand they have not made terms with you yet after this morning."



Victor looked at John King with some surprise. Then he bit his lips and replied,

"I have made arrangements to sing hereafter at the Cathedral on St. Mark's Avenue. I don't care to sing any more where I am watched by spies."

There was a pause. Then John King said simply, "The time may come, Stanwood, when you will need a friend. When that time comes, if you will remember this occasion and my reasons for talking to you as I have this morning, and come to me for any help I can give you, it will be given as freely as the love I have for you this very moment. In Christ's name, dear soul, I pray you may be saved."

There was a second of indecision in Victor's manner as John King spoke, which revealed the inward conflict. Then without a word he turned and went away, leaving the preacher with bowed head and heavy heart praying for him.

It would be unaccountable to explain Victor's behaviour on this occasion without knowing the inner history of his experience since the night of the memorable concert. The great moving motive that urged him on was his all-absorbing vanity. That vanity, however, was the real means of bringing him into the reach of the gambling passion. His great extrava-



gances were clothes and jewelry. The very first money that came into his hands from his Sunday singing he spent in the purchase of an opal ring that cost twenty-five dollars. He went to a fashionable tailor three weeks after that and bought a suit for \$100 including overcoat and gloves and neckties and other luxuries of the toilet case. When Victoria had been with him she had regulated his expenditures. Now that she was gone he put no check upon his extravagances. It was easy at the rate he was going, to expend every cent he earned and all that Victoria sent him. To avoid suspicion on his father's part he had at first turned over a little money for household uses. But during the last month he had gone into debt for several things. And that had led up to the Clark street experience.

One evening he had gone to a band concert and while there he met a young man who had formerly played in the same orchestra with Victor's father. He had chatted with Victor during the intervals between the numbers and at the close of the concert had walked along towards home with him. Cutting through Clark Street to shorten the distance, his companion had proposed that they stop at a friend's for a moment and Victor, unsuspecting the exact character of the place, went in. Once there he yielded to the horrible fas-



cination of the gambling mania. He went repeatedly after the first evening. When Tom saw him that Saturday he had become familiar with the place and others like it by frequent visits. It is needless to say that he was the victim of the professional sharpers who fleeced their victims so cunningly that they were actually made to believe that they would some time win everything back. It seemed incredible that the artistic gifted soul of one like Victor could fall down at the feet of this Gambling God. Nevertheless he fell and with a swiftness that was terrible. It was his miserable vanity, his love of display, his yearning for fine, luxurious things that led him to his fall. And neither the pleadings of his own conscience nor the remembrance of Victoria nor the manly appeal of John King were of any avail to turn him back from his chosen way. His deception in his letters to Victoria in which he asked for money was simply one indication among others of the awful nature of the passion which, as John King had said, is death to all true life and bound to become master unless fought and subdued.

So Victor began the next Sunday to sing in the Cathedral at St. Mark's Avenue, where his voice attracted even more people, if possible, than at John King's church.



Meanwhile Victoria was as yet ignorant of the truth and her happiness was undimmed by the knowledge of what would have poisoned her career. There was no one to inform her of Victor's habits. The father guessed or suspected what was going on but his own lapses into drunken ways deadened his sense of honor at moral weakness in his boy. John King was honestly puzzled for the time being to know just the extent of his duty in the way of informing Victoria of what he knew. He was not in doubt for long but while he hesitated, Victoria went on her way with the old thought of the brother. She was living a life of genuine enjoyment in spite of the severe physical strain under which she was compelled to perform her part in the company.

One who has never gone upon the road with a musical or theatrical company cannot understand the constant tension which such a life implies. It is made up of stops at all kinds of hotels, irregular hours for sleep, unnatural hours for travel and eating, with demands upon the patience and the nerves that belong to such a career. Victoria endured the hardship and excitement as part of the life she had chosen for herself. She was a favorite with the other members of the company because she was free from all professional pride and jealousy. Several times she had accommodated other



members in the hotel advantages and other ways where musical and theatrical professional people do not usually take pains to be friendly. As a consequence nearly every one in the company was on good terms with the little violinist. The public received her warmly also. Hardly a concert passed in any town without making two or three recalls for Victoria. Her reputation was steadily growing. After she had been with the manager four months he even hinted at an increase in the contract price but had not yet paid her more than at the beginning.

So the life, the public life, pleased Victoria, and as she said to herself it suited her. It was a busy life with very little leisure for social pleasures or reading or culture aside from the individual culture of one's own gift. Sundays were rest days. The circuit of regular engagements sometimes called for Sunday travel. It happened that during this special season, Sundays were little broken into and generally Victoria spent the day either in writing to Victor, resting quietly at her hotel, or attending services somewhere with one or two of the company. When the Sunday found them in one of the larger towns or in the cities, she found out the superintendent of the hospital or blind asylum or whatever institution for suffering hu-



manity was established near, and offered her services as player for the pleasure of the inmates. Her habit in this which the other members of the company thought an odd whim, became known as her reputation grew, and very often she would find waiting for her in places where Sunday stops were made, three or four invitations to as many different hospitals or refuges of suffering human kind begging her to come and give one of her Sunday recitals. They were not recitals either. They were rather the tenderest, most healing, devout, reverent hymns of prayer that she made her beloved Cremona breathe out like a living soul for the delight and rest and worship of the poor souls racked with pain or tortured with sin. The sight of Victoria on a Sunday afternoon, standing in the middle of one of the wards of a great hospital with rows of white beds stretching past on both sides, with nurses and doctors and servants standing about listening, with white faces on many pillows glistening with tears as the music pulsed and throbbed and flowed through heart and mind with uplifting and soothing power,—this was what very few who saw and heard ever forgot. As for Victoria it was her one hour of worship in public. Many a grand church had eagerly sought to add to its attractions for Sunday music the little woman who played such a vio-



lin, but if there was a hospital or poor house or a refuge for sinful or depraved that needed her or asked her she always went where the suffering and the sinful were. She never played on such occasions without thinking of Aura. The white loving unconscious face of her dead friend just as she looked that time when she smiled and said, "I knew you would keep your promise," looked up at Victoria from many and many a cot in strange places where she played those Sunday afternoons. Then she would go back to her room and often kneel down and pray that she might atone for her former selfishness, as she called it, by future service. There was something of the Roman Catholic in Victoria and yet she was not what people would generally call a religious girl. She was religious to the extent that she would have done almost any amount of penance for a wrong but it is doubtful if she ever would have confessed her wrong to any one except to God alone.

The Question Class had nearly all gathered at John King's the evening after Victor's last solo in the church. It lacked a few minutes of eight o'clock. The class was having a social time as usual. Tom and Richard were discussing a recent novel; three or four young men and women were standing near by and listening.

"Of course," Tom was saying, "it isn't necessary



that every novel should be a sermon. That isn't the object of a novel."

"At the same time," said Richard, "a novel without a definite purpose to teach or better the reader always seems to me like a waste of brain to write and a waste of time to read."

"Mr. Bruce would rule out all the books that are written to amuse people," Miss Fergus remarked with a laugh.

"Not if the amusement was what people needed to rest them and make them better able to do their work. There is a place in the world for what is funny as well as for what is serious."

"Yes," said Tom, "'a time to laugh and a time to weep.' That's scripture."

Just then John King came in and the class settled itself for the evening. He had not had as much time as usual to look over the questions and he said so to the class, asking them to be patient with him if his answers were partial and unsatisfactory.

The first question was, "What would you do with a million dollars if you had them?"

"I don't know. Do you? Does anybody? I would buy a cork foot for a poor woman who lost her foot by an accident lately and can't earn her living



by washing as she did before the loss of her foot. Sixty dollars will buy it and she can go on with her work, so the surgeon says, but no one has sixty dollars to spare. At least I have not been able to find any one who has that much, though I have been to several men who are worth several hundred thousand dollars. Of course if I had two million dollars I could probably spare sixty dollars out of it. And then I would buy Grace there a piano if I thought she would make a good use of it and with a part of what was left I would start about a hundred Kindergartens down in the slums and endow them handsomely. And—well I don't know. It would puzzle me to know how to get rid of such a quantity as a million. It would be an awful responsibility. I believe I should want a guardian appointed over me and even then I expect I should make a good many foolish uses of such an amount of money. I expect I should have to resign from my church if I fell heir to a million dollars."

"Why?" asked Tom suddenly. The class laughed at the interruption, it was so sudden and so unusual.

"Why!" replied John King with a comical look at Tom. "Because if I was worth a million, my church wouldn't think it necessary to pay me my salary promptly." The preacher took up another question.



“What is the best use to which a large fortune can be put?”

“The questions seem to me to run to finance tonight. It does not seem hard to tell how we would dispose of other people's money if we only had it, but if we actually had it to use, it would not seem so easy. I once knew a millionaire who said he was in almost constant trouble concerning the disposition of his benevolences. He said people had no idea of the number of calls that a rich man had upon his benevolence. Undoubtedly the best use to which a large fortune can be put is to make it do the most good in its use to the largest number of people and do it in one's own life time. I am one of those who believe the right and best use of money is to make it do all it will while I am alive to plan and execute. I don't believe in bequeathing very large sums to people or institutions after I am dead. In nine cases out of ten where a rich man leaves his son large wealth that the son has never worked for or denied himself to get, it has been squandered or foolishly invested, leaving the next generation where the grandfather began his struggle. I would bequeath plenty of knowledge, virtue, manhood, energy, cheerfulness, but not much unearned wealth. This inheritance of other people's money as a general thing pro-



duces a class of selfish aristocrats who have a scorn of physical toil and are lacking in sympathy with the great toiling masses. The best use to which a large fortune can be put is to use it. And to use a large fortune right requires more wisdom and consecration than most men of wealth possess. It is very easy to ask What would Christ do with a large fortune if he were living now? It is not so easy to tell how he would act in detail.

“What! Another one on the money question?” John King exclaimed as he took the third question out of the box. “Well, this seems like a fair one.”

“Is not the possession of money really necessary to the happiness and the very development of life as we have to live it on earth?”

“Yes, we have to pay our bills if we wish to escape a good deal of worry. Unless we are of that class of people who never worry about anything, not even their own sins. There is nothing gained by crying down money. The Bible does not say that money is evil. It is the love of it that is the root of all kinds of evil. But money itself is a very convenient medium of exchange and every civilized man must have it to buy food, clothes, education, and a thousand other necessities. In that sense it is absolutely necessary. It is



true that certain things are out of our reach if we do not possess wealth. We cannot travel abroad, we cannot educate ourselves in Art or Music or Literature or Science to any great extent without money. We are shut out from very many grand and beautiful experiences no doubt, if we do not possess the only thing that will make them known to us, and in that sense it is literally true that the possession of wealth is necessary to our development. That is what comes of being civilized. But while all this is true, don't make the mistake of supposing that happiness depends on money. If it did, the world would be a much more sorrowful place than it now is. Happiness is not the result of possessions. It may exist with and may exist without them. The development of civilized life as we live it, may make large use of money. That is, money can buy development, it can buy leisure, travel, luxuries. But it cannot buy contentment, peace of conscience, or happiness. Don't forget the saying of the greatest and wisest teacher of human life. 'For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.' It is not what we have that determines our happiness or unhappiness. It is what we are."

"(1.) What are the most conspicuous faults of the young men of this age?



“(2.) What are the most conspicuous faults of the young women of this age?”

“This is contrary to our rules. Only one question from each member of the class, you know. But we will let it pass this time. Perhaps no one has a right to say what are the faults of an age. We see so few people out of the millions living. The faults of the young men I know, say a few hundred in all (young men, not faults), are thoughtlessness, shallow thinking, lack of reverence, not enough definite purpose in life, too easy contentment with easy going things. A good many young men are vain of their physical beauty and—well it hurts me to try to answer this question. I don’t like to hurt your feelings either—”

“Isn’t present company excepted, sir?” asked Tom.

“You must not force me to be too honest, Tom, we are all mortal. As to the young women, their greatest faults are—I declare—I don’t think of any just at present,” (loud cries of protest from several young men in the class), “but on second thought I may be allowed to say that there are faults enough, that is to say, well—we are all human. Really this is not in my line, seems too much like finding fault, young people, and that won’t do, especially in a preacher. So we had best let this question pass. One or two more.”



"Is it harder to do right than wrong?"

"Sometimes. Depends on what sort of a habit you've got into. Doing right is a habit. Doing wrong is a habit. It's like going to church. If you are in the habit of going it's easy. If not, it's hard. I have known people to stay away from prayer meeting on a rainy night just because they were not in the habit of going on a pleasant night. If Adam and Eve had resisted the first temptation and the second and the third, after awhile they would have acquired the habit of doing right all the time."

"Is it pleasanter to do right than wrong?"

"Ah! I suspect some of you have been writing your questions in company. I don't care. It shows an interest in the work that does me good.

"Pleasanter to do right than wrong? Try it and see. Most of you have done so, I take it. What result did you find? Answer your own question. People sometimes sneer at goodness as if it were dull and stupid and never had any good times. The time to judge of the pleasantness of doing right or wrong is not at the immediate time of the action, it is in the end. At the close of the transaction. That may come years after. Some things that taste good at the time leave a bitter taste in the mouth afterwards. There is only



one right answer to this question. It is always pleasanter to do right than wrong. We are not to judge by the feeling, but by the result."

John King dismissed the class early on account of pressure of other work. He was also feeling more than usually grave and troubled over Victor and his knowledge of the boy's serious danger. As the week wore on he at last decided on his course of action. He could not let the matter remain where it was. There was a bright strong soul going to ruin. It was not in the nature of John King to see it and do nothing. And so he did what seemed to him the only thing left for him to do.

When Saturday came again Victoria was playing in one of the large towns three hundred miles from John King's church and the Cathedral of St. Mark's Avenue. In the afternoon of the day she had received a short letter from Victor.

Dear Vi:

"Father is ill again. He took a severe cold three days ago. His old rheumatism is confining him to the house. He will not be able to walk for a week at the quickest. I find that the expenses of the house are very large. Father demands the best of everything when he is ill. Don't you think it would be possible to get the manager to raise your salary? Insist upon it, Vi. You are worth more than \$75 a week. If you can spare a little first of next week it will be a great help. I am singing at St. Mark's Avenue now. I don't get but three dollars a Sunday more than John King's paid, but every little helps. Don't get sick. Good by,

Victor.



Victoria read this letter with a feeling of pain. It seemed cold and hard. It lacked loving phrases. Not even a "Yours Lovingly" at the close. And the constant appeal for money hurt her. She would have shared every cent she had with Victor but could not explain his extravagance. It seemed so unnecessary. A vague feeling of trouble, of coming sorrow passed over her. She went to the hall for the evening concert, feeling depressed. Once on the stage with her instrument she played as usual. But she was glad when it was over. The hotel was near by but it was raining and as she came out of the hall carrying her violin she felt so tired and full of longing to get into her room that without waiting for others as usual, she beckoned for a cab. There were half a dozen near and two or three started up towards the curb. At that moment a man who had been standing near the corner watching people come out of the hall came out and standing in front of Victoria, took off his hat. She was surprised but not frightened, until as the electric light blazed out clearer she saw it was her father just drunk enough to be very timidly polite. The shock of meeting him at this distance from home just after Victor's letter, so startled Victoria that she stepped back off the curb and lost her balance. One of the cabs coming



up, knocked the violin case out of her hand. It fell under the horse's feet and before Victoria had recovered herself to rescue it, the horses plunged violently and pulled the heavy cab over it. The light wood case was smashed into splinters. Victoria, regardless of all danger, sprang down into the confusion, even the strange appearance of her father forgotten in the thought of the accident to the precious Cremona, loaned her by the manager. Some one coming out of the hall helped her. She dragged the fragments of the precious case out upon the sidewalk and knelt over them in the rain. The violin had been completely ruined. The neck was broken into several pieces and the body of the instrument was a mass of brown splinters. She buried her face in her hands and sobbed. It was like the death of an old friend to see her dear old violin torn to pieces. She shuddered. Then she lifted her eyes and saw her father standing there.



## CHAPTER V.



AS Victoria kneeled there in the rain over the ruins of the precious violin and grew more and more conscious of her father's presence, and of his drunken condition, she almost lost heart at the thought of what lay before her. Her public career, however, had been a stern teacher of self control. She soon became aware of a curious crowd of all sorts of people that had gathered around her. She rose quickly and gathering up the pieces of the instrument, she walked resolutely up to her father and said to him firmly, "Father, I want you to go with me. Do you understand?"

The father nodded, half sobered by the accident.

Victoria almost pushed him into the cab and throwing the fragments of the case and violin upon the floor she entered herself, telling the driver her hotel. Once there she managed to get the father up to her room and throwing the pieces of the instrument on a chair, she flung herself on a couch and gave way to a good cry. The fact was she was nervous and exhausted with an unusually hard week's work. The sight of her



father and the ruin of her instrument proved to be more than she could bear.

The father sat stupidly looking at her. The sight of her distress was rapidly sobering him. After awhile when Victoria's sobs had ceased he said feebly, "Don't cry, Victoria. Aren't you glad to see me?"

"Of course I am, father. But I had no idea that you were anywhere near me. Victor wrote that you were ill with your old rheumatic trouble and could not leave the house."

"I haven't been sick at all," said her father.

"Why did Victor write me so then?" asked Victoria a little sharply. She did not know how far she could trust her father's word in his present condition.

"Victor has been going to the bad. He doesn't drink, but he gambles."

Victoria trembled. For the time being she forgot all about her violin. This was a greater trouble if it were true.

"Tell me, father. Do you know that? Oh no! I can't believe it. Victor was vain and extravagant but he never had bad acquaintances. I'm sure he never had any vices."

"John King told me," replied the father who al-



ways confined himself to short sentences when under the influence of liquor.

It was an unsatisfactory explanation but in the morning Victoria learned the whole truth. Her father was sober and humble. He shrank before Victoria like a guilty child. But he told her why he had come.

John King had finally felt the pressure of his knowledge of Victor's course so great that he could bear it no longer and resolved to get word in some way to the sister. He thought of the two as they had stood before him that first Sunday, bright, gifted, handsome with health and youth. It was not right for the girl to remain ignorant of the boy's evil ways. She might have the power to redeem him if she knew. So John King had gone to the father and told him. He knew very little of the family. Nothing at all of Mr. Stanwood's drinking habits. He had impressed on the father the importance of letting Victoria know the facts in some way and his judgment was confirmed by Mr. Stanwood who declared that Victoria's influence over her brother had always been greater than his own. And so it happened that Mr. Stanwood, taking what money he could get together, had started the very next day to go and see Victoria.

Once on the way he had yielded to his temptation



and by the time he reached the town where Victoria was playing he was under the influence of the drink, not enough however to prevent his finding out where Victoria was playing. He lingered about the hall until Victoria came out and then approached her with the result we have seen.

As they talked it over that morning, with the father seated in a dejected and depressed attitude and Victoria looking over towards the ruined violin every few moments with a look of grave sorrow, she began to understand the deception of Victor's letters. He had purposely lied to her about himself and his father in order to get more money with which to gamble. This fact as the father made it clear to Victoria filled her heart with indignation. She could not find any excuse for such deceit. She was perfect truthfulness herself in every detail, and much as she loved Victor she could not help rebuking him for yielding to his great vanity which had led him astray.

"How much is Victor getting now at St. Mark's Avenue?" she asked her father.

"He is getting twenty-two dollars a Sunday. I found out from friends of mine on the music committee there."

"And yet he wrote me that he was getting only



three dollars a Sunday more than at John King's." Victoria flushed at the remembrance of the appeals made to her by Victor for more money. She found that her love for him was mixed with contempt and a loss of respect. At the same time it was all terrible to her. One thing however she was determined on. She would not send Victor another cent of money. She told her father so and made arrangements with him to place all the money not needed for the home expenses in the bank. Victoria could trust her father with that. Weak and yielding as he was in the matter of the drink passion, he had never deceived Victoria in money matters and had not misappropriated what she had sent directly to him.

By the time everything had been talked over it was nearly noon. Almost for the first time that morning Victoria remembered that it was Sunday. She remembered, also, at the same moment that the manager had made an appointment to come with his wife, who was a member of the company, and go with her to the great Hospital of Incurables, as it was called, and be present while she played. The manager had been with the company only part of the time. His business relations with other companies on the road had prevented his being with his first concert company. He had ex-



pected to reach the city Saturday night. His wife had told Victoria the day before that he wished to go to the hospital in the afternoon and Victoria had felt pleased to have their sympathy and interest in what had become a real part of her best life.

But now she thought of the manager's coming with a feeling like terror. He was large hearted in many ways. His loan of the instrument to her was one token of that. But he was also an intense lover of rare articles gathered from the ends of the earth. He had in his collection daggers given to him by famous actors who had played Macbeth. Costly copies of rare books donated by great authors. Gems once worn by renowned singers. Musical instruments played by composers and singers. The Cremona given him by Camilla Urso was one of the choicest pieces of his collection. Victoria knew that he prized it as a peculiarly valuable instrument, both from its personal history and its intrinsic worth as a violin. Probably its duplicate could not be found in all Europe. Victoria looked over at the shapeless mass which was in the corner where she had thrown it and she shuddered again as she had done when she kneeled over it in the rain.

She wished that her father was not in the hotel. She dreaded his presence when the manager came. And



yet she did not want to send him out of the hotel for fear he would get to drinking again. He had planned to start for home again Monday morning.

Victoria and the father went down to dinner although neither of them felt like eating anything. Victoria was wretched. Her thought of Victor was a thought of mingled love and indignation. Her heart bled for him. She wished she could see him and talk with him.

Father and daughter had been back in their room about an hour where they had been sitting silently when there was a knock, and as Victoria, her heart beating, opened the door, in came the manager and his wife. They were in good spirits and greeted Victoria heartily. She introduced her father nervously and tried to summon up courage for the confession before her.

"Well, Miss Stanwood," said the manager, "I always hear good reports of your success. The company is having a good season, thanks largely to your reputation on the Cremona. Come. Can't we have a little prelude on it before we go over to the Hospital? Give us the Paganini's Witch Dance if you don't object to it on Sunday."

Victoria caught her breath and then trembled.



Then suddenly rising she went over to the corner where the fragments of the Cremona lay and gathering them up brought them over and stood holding them directly in front of the manager. Her cheeks were burning and her voice broke as she said,

“I had an accident last night. And here is the Cremona ruined. You can dismiss me from the company and I will work at something until I earn enough to pay what this cost. I know I cannot really ever pay for it. I—”

She could not say more. The look on the manager's face stopped her.

“Pay for it!” he exclaimed jumping up angrily. “I should think not! What a piece of folly on my part to let that go out of my hands! Why, do you know what the value of that instrument was?” Victoria did not say a word.

The manager went on excitedly,

“Why, it couldn't be duplicated anywhere. It cost over two thousand dollars and its real value as a souvenir of one of the greatest women players in the world was invaluable. I was a fool! A fool!” The manager was almost beside himself. Victoria, feeling as she did, offered no excuse, attempted no defense. She felt that all the manager could say was deserved. Had she



not loved the instrument as much as he? Was it not like losing a dear friend, a relative, to lose its companionship. She stood there pale with agony, sensitive soul as she was, and not a tear came to relieve her. The manager was almost beside himself with anger. He forgot to be a gentleman. "Yes," he kept repeating, "I was a fool to let a mere girl have the care of—"

It was at that point that Victoria was amazed to see her father rise up from his seat by the window where he had apparently been forgotten by every one and walking across the room he confronted the excited manager, and said with a firmness and dignity that Victoria had never seen in him before, "Sir, it may be that you were a fool as you say to let my daughter have the violin to use, but I will not allow her to be humiliated by your reproaches when she is suffering sufficiently already. If you want to blame any one for this misfortune, blame me. I caused it."

The manager stopped and a great wave of blood crossed his face. For a moment Victoria almost feared he was going to strike her father. Then he sat down while Mr. Stanwood briefly but clearly related the circumstances connected with the accident. He made no attempt to conceal his own intoxication but related everything as it was. When he had finished, the man-



ager was silent. He had had time to cool off. Victoria sat on the couch, her head buried in the cushions.

The manager was a person who had seen a good deal of life and he was not a fool in spite of his statement about himself so recently made. He was also a true gentleman at heart, and besides he had an eye for business and knew the value of Victoria to his company. There was an awkward pause broken by the manager as he rose again and holding out his hand said, "Miss Stanwood, I apologize for my loss of temper. Will you come and see me in the hotel parlor to-morrow morning? You will hardly care to go to the Hospital to-day." He added the last sentence with a slight smile and without another word went out of the room with his wife.

After he had gone, Victoria broke down. She cried, this girl of nineteen, as hard as if she were a little child instead of the woman who had begun to win the reputation of the first player on the violin in America. Her father after his manly defense of her had lapsed again into the weak impersonal character she knew so well. But he comforted her as best he could. He seemed to be preoccupied with something. It was so marked that Victoria, even in her anguish, noticed it. Later in the day he inquired if there was not some train for home



he could take that night. There was one starting about midnight. To Victoria's surprise he insisted on going home on that train. She tried to persuade him to remain until morning. But he was firm and started that night. The last words he said were, "Don't worry over the violin. We shall find a way to pay for it."

In the morning after breakfast Victoria went into the parlor to see the manager. He came in, a few moments after, and greeted her gravely. Victoria was nervous.

"I can't conceal my regret at the ruin of the Cremona of course, Miss Stanwood. It was highly prized by me. It will seriously affect your playing also."

"Yes, it is a miserable thing for you. I have no excuse. I am ready to leave the company if you think best. I have no heart to play more."

The manager looked at her keenly. He was an experienced man of the world and something in Victoria's manner told him that something more than the loss of the violin was troubling her. He asked no questions but went on.

"No, that would be foolish." He looked at the small sorrowful figure and said, his face and manner lighting up, "Do you know, Miss Stanwood, you can make any violin, even a common one, talk as most per-



formers cannot make a Cremona talk? You are not dependent on any particular instrument. I cannot afford to lose you out of my company. Besides I wish to tell you in confidence I am expecting to go abroad in less than a month with the best of the company and I want you to go with them."

Victoria stared and her pulses throbbed. Abroad! To play in London, Paris, Berlin! It had been the dream of her childhood. But then, could she leave her father and Victor? She must have time to think of it.

She told the manager so and he seemed willing to give her time to decide it.

"Take two weeks. At the end of that time let me know. Meanwhile I have secured a good instrument for you until you can send for your own if you wish to." And the manager rose and went away leaving Victoria thankful to him for his courtesy and the absence of any resentment against her, so far as she could see, for the ruin of the poor Cremona.

She wrote a brief note to the father asking him to send her own violin. Also a letter to Victor, a letter of loving entreaty that he would for her sake and the sake of his future success live the life of a true gentleman. She wrote him with the loving frankness and truthfulness that always characterized her.



"I cannot let you have any more money, Vic, until I am assured that you will make a good use of it. Gambling in any form has always had a great horror to me. I cannot endure the thought of you, dear, dear Vic, becoming a victim to this vice. I am almost unnerved for my work. But I must go on. I cannot even leave to come and see you. I am under sacred contract to remain with the company this month and there is a possibility that at the end of that time I may go abroad. O Vic, for the sake of the love you bear me, for the sake of the old times when we were so happy as children, be a man. Use your great gift to be a blessing to yourself and to others. You know I do not very often pray for anything. But every day I offer a prayer for you. God bless and keep you, dear Vic."

There came no answer to this letter. Through all the remaining weeks of her contract with the company, Victoria received no reply to it or to others written. Victor would not write a word. She wrote again and still no answer and it seemed to Victoria that a death had taken place, the death of the old loving relationship that once existed between them.

Two days after writing to her father for the violin Victoria was astonished to receive from him a letter



containing a draft for two thousand dollars, explained by the letter.

Your mother, Victoria, at the time of her death was in possession of a certain portion of her older sister's estate which was in litigation. She charged me without your knowledge (you were only six years old at that time) to use the income from the property for you and Victor when you became old enough to receive most benefit from it. The two thousand is the accumulation from this income during the last twelve years. Under the legal terms by which the property is administered Victor will come into the possession of a certain sum when he is of age. This two thousand is your own to use as you see fit. If the payment of all or part of it for the ruined violin will be more satisfactory to you than any other use, you are at liberty so to dispose of it. That was the price which the manager mentioned. Your poor old father, Vi, is a disgrace to you in many ways. But he has guarded this little inheritance for you and wants you to get out of it all that it can give you at the present time.

Victor has not been home since I returned.

Your loving father, George Stanwood.

Victoria held the draft in her hand and wondered if it was all a dream. It read like a chapter out of a story. She thought with a tear in her eye of her father's care of this trust confided to him. It was like him to be willing that she should use the money to pay for the violin. He was always very simple in his thought of money and all its uses. But in her heart she felt glad to think she could pay the manager. She was like her father in that sensitive shrinking from being under obligation to such an extent.

So that very day she found an opportunity to present the draft to the manager. It was duly endorsed



and the manager saw in a second that it was good for the cash in full.

He held it in his hand a moment, looking down at the little figure that stood before him so gravely.

"I did not know, Miss Stanwood, that I was employing in my concert company an heiress in disguise," he said, with a twinkle of the eye that belonged to his whole face.

Victoria felt a little annoyed. "I am not an heiress. That is simply a little money my mother left me to use when I grew up. If you will take it I shall feel as if I had made part amends for breaking the violin."

There was a moment's hesitation and then the manager said quietly, "Very well." That was all. He put the draft into his pocketbook. Victoria felt better. Somehow she had anticipated a long discussion. She thought at first then, the manager would not accept the money. She thought that he had probably come to the conclusion that he could not afford to lose two thousand dollar violins without some compensation. Besides, as has been said, the manager had an eye for business. He was shrewd and careful and his expenses were large. So that while liberal and large hearted in many ways he generally reckoned very sharply with those in his employ. Victoria therefore saw her two thousand dollars



vanish in the pocket book of the manager and being the daughter of her father with his ideas of money she did not feel any great loss. She had grown up without knowledge of money. It did not really mean so very much to her after all except in its power to give her a certain relief of mind for the irreparable loss.

When the two weeks were up, during which Victoria was debating over the trip abroad, she signed articles with the manager for six months to go abroad with the company. They were to start within a month. That gave her time to go home and visit a little.

She had been longing all the time to see Victor again. When she reached the city and stepped down from the train her father was there to meet her. She looked around for the familiar, boyish, exquisitely dressed figure of Victor.

“Where is Victor, father?”

“He has gone away. We had a quarrel and he left home. He would not tell me where he was going.”

So Victoria's home coming was without much comfort. She wanted to see Victor, to talk with him before she sailed, to have some assurance that he was going to live a noble life. With a heavy heart she made her preparations for her trip in the few days left her, hoping every day that Victor would appear. But he had



left the church at St. Mark's Avenue and no one of his few friends in the city knew where he was, and the day came when Victoria left for New York to take the steamer there and the last look she cast tearfully back rested on her father standing in the station forlorn, alone. Victoria sighed with a sob of homesickness as she saw him there. Her prayer went out for him and for Victor. Would they ever be united? God bless father and Victor, was her prayer as the train whirled her out into the new life before her.

When the Question Class met at John King's the Monday night after Victoria's departure it was unusually crowded and the questions were of a more varied character than he had ever had to answer. The first one he took out was—

“How shall I spend Sunday?”

“That depends on who you are. If you are a minister, you will spend the day in a certain manner. If you are a blacksmith, you will spend it in another manner. In either case you will attend church service if you are well and able otherwise to go. Every man needs the good which comes from attending public worship. Whether you will go more than once to church will depend on several things. If your cares and burdens of housework are such that the body demands physical



rest it may be all that you ought to do to attend one service. If you are well and strong and blessed with plenty of energy the best way for you to spend Sunday is to do your share in all the church work on Sunday, the Sunday School, and the young people's meeting and the evening service. Some one has to take hold of these things or they wouldn't be done. And I have noticed that the people who are active in the Sunday School and Young People's meeting are, as a rule, to be found at the evening service, when there is one, and from my observation, these people live just as long and have just as good health and appear to be just as happy as the people who don't go to but one church service or to none at all. Then there should be time and room on Sunday for some good quiet thinking and reading and resting of mind and heart. Rest and worship. These are the great ideas of the day that we need to insist upon. The day was made for man. It is full of possibilities. It is possible for us to spend it in a great variety of ways and still spend it right. This rule it seems to me can safely be made. Never do any thing on that day that will interfere with the rest and worship of yourself and others."

"Why are theaters considered immoral and questionable places of amusement by so many people?"

"Because too often immoral or questionable plays are



to be found in theaters. A play recently traveled over the United States and was seen and heard in all the large cities in which the lesson taught was so productive of evil that several crimes were directly traced to it committed by young men and boys who had witnessed it. It is a terrible shame that so powerful a teacher of great moral lessons should have so bad a reputation. The theater started as a religious institution. Only plays with a tremendous religious moral were used by the Greeks, for the most part, in the beginning of the dramatic art. At present the use of plays with immoral love for the central idea is so common that very many people declare the influence of the theater is altogether bad. I do not go so far as that, but I do think that the theater to-day is a long ways from being what it ought to be. If people would only discriminate and never go to any but the good plays, the managers would soon cease to give the public anything questionable. Because it wouldn't pay. And that is what the managers are looking for. But I have seen the very same people who went and applauded the lessons taught by as clean and wholesome a play as 'Little Lord Fauntleroy,' go the very next night and sit through two or three hours of a questionable play concerning which a noted theater-goer in this city said to me, 'It made



me blush for shame for weeks afterwards.' And yet he went just the same because the acting was such a treat, and he would go again if he had a chance."

"Does it pay to be unselfish?"

"Yes, if feelings count for anything. You won't always make so much money or have so easy a time but you'll feel better inside."

"What are the two best books for the average young man to read?"

"The Bible, and Pilgrim's Progress. The young man who is familiar with these two volumes will be well educated so far as a knowledge of literature and humanity is concerned."

"What is a short rule for success in business?"

"Tell the truth. Be prompt, courteous, and kindly. Pray every morning for wisdom in details. Take God into partnership. Glorify Him in everything you do. Follow these directions and you will not always make money, but you will succeed. And success even in business does not consist in simply making money. It consists in making manhood. Anything which does not do that is failure."

"You said a few weeks ago that falling in love was as natural as coming of age. How does it happen then



that so many young men make mistakes and fall in love with the wrong girl?"

"I didn't know they did. If they do they have themselves to blame. For true love is always a divine thing of divine meaning and it makes no mistakes. It is because young men do not make this great experience in life a serious as well as a happy experience, it is because they treat it as a sentiment instead of a part of God's thought of them that mistakes are made and unhappy marriages result. As I said several weeks ago true love is always happy and always lasting. It is your false article that disappoints and betrays people."

"Is life worth living?"

"What! Do you young people ask this old question so soon? Yes! Yes! It is worth living if you live it right. Otherwise I am inclined to think it isn't worth while."

"I made a bet over the result of the state election and lost. If I pay it I shall lose a large sum of money and be unable to pay other bills that I owe for household expenses. What is my duty? Ought I to pay the money on the debt?"

"In the first place you had no business to bet at all. You not only broke a law of the state which expressly forbids betting on elections but you became a gambler



when you made that bet. For a gambler is one who tries to get something for nothing out of another man. Betting is gambling. It is vicious in principle and immoral in practice. It is the shame of great political parties that the very men who control and direct party affairs break the laws of the state and set an example to all young men to do the same. There is no question however as to your duty now that you have bet. Pay the money over and never bet again on anything as long as you live. It ought to teach you a good lesson if you have trouble from all your other obligations. You had no right to incur such a risk when you knew the money you ought to pay your honest creditors would be endangered by the chances of a political campaign. Yes, pay your bet. That's the only thing for you to do now. And let it be the last one you will ever have to pay."

"I feel discontented and unhappy and blue a good deal of the time. What is the matter with me? How can I go to work to be contented and happy?"

"Maybe your liver is out of order. Excuse that, if it sounds coarse. But the physical is so closely connected with the spiritual that a good many people are cross and discontented because their bodies are diseased. If you are healthy and have an average intellect and live in the United States and are young, you have no



excuse whatever for being discontented and blue and unhappy. With all eternity before you, with God in history and yourself a part of it, with such endless possibilities to make the world better, what earthly excuse have you for not living a life of deep satisfaction and happiness? Oh, get out of yourself. Do something for some one else. Lift on the world to raise it up instead of bearing down on it with your selfish personal unhappiness. If you believe in God and the future and the present and your part in the universe, it is wicked for you to go through life discontented and unhappy. Be someone. Believe in your beliefs with all your might. Live like an angel, not like an animal. If you are chronically unhappy something is wrong either with your body or your soul."

John King dismissed the class with the promise that next week his answers would be shorter so as to read the many questions still behind, and the class after a short social gathering departed.

At the wharf of the great steamship company in New York one day that week the usual busy scene was being presented which always attended the departure of a famous ocean traveler. The steamer was just casting loose from the slip. The gangway had been pulled off, the bow was slowly swinging around, and the people



on the decks upper and lower were exchanging last farewells with friends on the slip. Clear up to the extreme edge of the wharf the people were massed and back in under the cover of it. Some were laughing and smiling. Others were crying. One little old woman in a faded calico dress with her hands clasped before her was looking up straight towards a boy who leaned out over the rail of the steerage deck. Down the faces of both of them, mother and son, the tears were streaming, each apparently entirely oblivious of all the other people as if they two were the only ones there. A chapter of tragic history was in their faces but so it was with many others on shore and on the steamer that day. In sharp contrast to these two tear stained faces was a laughing young girl who stood next the weeping mother, exchanging last greetings with one of the ship's stewards, evidently some familiar acquaintance who had made the ocean voyage many times. A little farther along the slip seated on one of the piles that projected high above the floor of the wharf was an Irishman, evidently a day laborer who had come down to see some of his relatives off on a visit to the old country. In his hand he held an immense bouquet of the most astonishing variety of garden flowers arranged apparently by his own hand. As the steamer widened the distance between himself



and the dock he threw the bouquet with all his might at some person on the steerage deck. In the effort he lost his balance and almost fell off the pile into the water. A roar of laughter went up from ship and shore. Several bouquets were thrown up from the crowd, some falling into the water, others lighting on the decks or clutched at and caught by countless hands held out over the rails. There was a cheer from the crowd. All the faces on the slip were looking up now. Those on the vessel saw the white, intent, laughing, weeping, cheering mass of faces and laughed and wept and looked back again.


Victoria standing on the promenade deck by the side of one of the company watched all this as the steamer now rapidly swung her bow around heading down the harbor. In a minute the wharf would be lost to sight, hid by the steamer. There was not a soul there that she knew. She stood looking on as a spectator only. Suddenly close by the extreme end of the slip standing near the pile on which the Irishman was seated, Victoria caught sight of a familiar face and figure. It was Victor dressed as usual in the most exquisite taste and style. Victoria screamed out his name. He did not hear or see her. She leaned out over the rail and waved her hand and cried again. He turned his head and saw her. She



could see how the look on his face changed. He called to her. Through all the cheering and babel of sounds she heard him and her heart leaped to think of the old childish days. The steamer swung around and swept the crowd on the wharf out of her sight. She left her place and hurried as fast as she could to the stern on the other side. But she had to struggle through very many people and by the time she caught sight of the wharf again the steamer was moving away fast and the distance was too great to talk over. The people however stood on the wharf a long time. And out on the stern of the vessel a little figure in black with unconscious tears running down over her face stood with waving handkerchief murmuring the prayer, "Victor! Dear Victor! Oh, how I wanted to see him and speak with him and have him kiss me good bye! The good God keep him safe until I come back again."



## CHAPTER VI.

N the evening of the day that Victoria sailed for Liverpool, two gentlemen were dining together at a fashionable restaurant on Broadway, New York.

After the first courses had been eaten and the diners were waiting for the dessert, one of them said to the other, "Have you heard the new tenor at the Concert Hall?"

"No, I have heard of him. Suppose we go and hear him this evening."

"Very well. I have heard him once but don't mind going again. The young fellow certainly has a very remarkable voice."

"I understand that he is a brother of the violin player who has had such a successful season in this country and has now gone abroad."

"Yes, they are twins, I understand. Come of a musical family. The father is dissipated, I've heard. The boy started in to sing in John King's church, Chicago."



"Quite a change from John King's church to the new Concert Hall."

"Not a change for the better morally I should say."

"Well hardly." The speaker laughed as he took up an evening paper and changed the subject by reading items of news about town.

At the hour of the performance at the new Concert Hall the two gentlemen went together. They were old theater and concert goers and nothing in the evening's program specially interested them. It was not of a very refined character and that was the reason probably that the large audience, composed mostly of young men about town, seemed to enjoy it so much. About the middle of the first half of the program Victor came on and sang. It was a simple ballad but he sung it exquisitely. Simply as a complete change from the coarse horse play and coarser songs that had preceded him it came to the jaded, sated theater-goers like a cup of clear cool sweet spring water after a night's debauch. He came back and sang a little piece that had some reference in it to Home or Mother. It was astonishing to note the effect of it on that mixed audience. Tears were to be seen on very many faces. The old man in the orchestra who played the bass viol and who had seen and heard in his theatrical life-time a great deal, wiped



away at his eyes without any attempt at concealment from the rest of the players. There was something in the voice that touched the sensibilities of the people. Something so delicate, so sweetly penetrating, so persuasive, that hearts were moved that had not felt the touch of emotion by anything preached or prayed by the human voice for many years.

It was that quality in his voice that made Victor a power with audiences. The manager of the new Concert Hall was shrewd enough to see that the most taking songs that Victor could sing were simple ballads with sentiment enough in them to appeal to certain common feelings. And those were the songs Victor sang. He occupied a curious position in the new Concert Hall. He was surrounded by a class of people who were for the most part coarse and immoral. The place itself was frequented by amusement seekers who were of the same character. And Victor himself was fast going the downward road and losing every day in his new life the virtue and gentleman purity of soul that Victoria once knew. And yet when the evening's hour for the concert came, he sang with a voice like an angel's, like a spotless sinless seraph, songs that contrasted so completely with everything in the rest of the program that for the brief five or ten minutes in all that he appeared, a new spirit



swept over the restless, thoughtless, swearing, drinking, dissipated crowd before him. It was a performance so unusual, so striking from its very contrast with the rest of the Concert Hall program, that it created much comment in the city. Gradually new faces appeared at the concerts. The people who were ashamed of themselves for being found in such rough surroundings came just to hear Victor. And in a short time he was, to the gratification of his unbounded vanity, one of the most talked about young men in New York. He grew in importance with himself and with the Concert Hall Manager and demanded an increase of salary which was granted at once. This led to grave results, but first let us account for Victor's change of position from singer in St. Mark's Avenue Cathedral to the New Concert Hall, New York.

When Victoria's father told her that Victor had quarrelled with him he did not tell her all the details which led up to the quarrel. In brief they were these.

Victor had discovered in some way shortly after the money was sent to his sister that he was legally entitled to a certain sum when he came of age. He had then tried to persuade his father to get the money at once. It could not be done without swearing falsely as to Victor's age. This the father refused to do. Victor had



become passionately angry and reproached his father for having sent the money to his sister. In his anger he left home threatening never to come back. He had lost nearly every cent he possessed in gambling and in lottery tickets. He was desperate and out of humor with the world. That was one reason he would not write Victoria after she had written that she could not let him have any more money until he could use it right. He had only one thing that was of any real value and that was his voice. It was a natural gift, so remarkable that training and practice simply gave it larger opportunity. About this time the manager of the new Concert Hall, New York, happened to be in Chicago and heard Victor one evening at St. Mark's Avenue. He was deeply impressed with the possibilities of such a voice for concert-hall work. He at once made advances to Victor to come to New York and sing regularly there. Victor in his depressed and bankrupt condition eagerly accepted the terms offered although they were only a little better than those he was offered by the church people. He was angry with his father, with Victoria, and with the world in general. He wanted to get away, and so in a few weeks he was in New York and the success of his engagement there was unmistakable from the beginning. The afternoon that Victoria sailed for



Liverpool, Victor had come down to see some acquaintances who were sailing by the same vessel. They had been members of the concert-hall company and were going to join other players in London for a brief season. Victor had not known anything of Victoria's movements. When he heard his name called that day it came to him with a startling strangeness. Then he had looked up and seen his sister. The next instance the vessel had swung Victoria out of view. He was hedged in by the people on the wharf and could not move. And yet at that moment all the old love for Victoria flamed back and he would have given his voice, almost, for an opportunity to speak to her. When the figure of Victoria again came in view the distance was too great. He waved his hand. There were also in his heart mingled feelings of shame and regret and vain resolves. He knew the life he was living would shock her unspeakably if she knew. When the crowd at last began to leave the wharf he walked away by himself and thought regretfully of old times when he could look Victoria in the face lovingly and without concealment. And yet such is the power of passion, that very night, after the concert was over, found Victor in one of the most noted gambling clubs in New York, his whole life absorbed in the chances of the dice. Poor soul! What a choice



you have made! What a master you have elected to serve!

The evening of the question class had come around and Tom and Richard were taking tea with John King. They were talking over people and things in a very informal way when Richard said suddenly, "By the way, what has become of that young tenor singer who made such a stir for a while here? He came to the class one night. I haven't seen or heard of him since."

Richard had been out of the city a good deal and had not kept track of all the news.

"Why, don't you know? He is in New York singing in a concert-hall there."

"What do you know about him, Tom?" John King asked gravely.

"One of my newspaper friends there wrote me the other day that he saw Stanwood in a big gambling club one night. He is going the way he started here."

"What a pity! what a pity! And such a gift as he has. I can remember the effect of his singing in the church. I never knew a more remarkable result to follow the singing of a song. I have seen tears flowing down the faces of people in church who were never known to shed a tear on any other occasion. And yet



the boy himself never felt the real truth of what he sang."

"How do you account for that, sir?" asked Tom.

John King was silent a minute.

"I don't account for it. I only know that people were moved by the tones of his voice to a temporary emotion that expressed itself strongly. I don't think the result was ever very permanent. That is, it never led to any great change in people's lives that I am aware of. But for the time being the effect was certainly very powerful. I feel sorry for the father and sister."

"The violinist? You remember, Dick, we heard her play the night of her debut."

"Yes. The playing was very much like the singing. Only it was even better. The girl played with her soul. The boy sang with his voice."

"The effect on the audience was the same."

"Not quite. I believe there was a difference. The voice had the advantage in being alive. But the instrument somehow seemed to have more to say. At least that was the impression I received."

The talk branched out into a discussion on the art and office of music of which all three, especially King, were passionately fond. Then the members of the class



began to arrive after tea and the two large front rooms filled up with animated talk.

"I wish my question might be answered to-night," said Miss Fergus who in spite of her assertion that she had nothing in the world to do was very prompt and regular in her attendance on the Question Class.

"What is your question?" asked Tom.

"As if I should tell!"

"I shall know anyhow when John King reads it. I can tell the authors of almost all the questions by this time."

"You can't guess what mine is, I know," replied Miss Fergus confidently.

"Didn't you put in that question last week, 'Is Life worth living?' "

"Well, what if I did. Anyone might have asked it."

"And that other one, 'Does it pay to be unselfish?' "

"I refuse to be examined in such a—"

"I knew that was yours, Miss Fergus," chuckled Tom. "I am a mind reader. There is a certain style of question that certain people always ask if they ask any."

Miss Fergus was about to reply when John King broke in good naturedly,

"Now Tom, you are always teasing Miss Fergus. I



feel like taking her part and I don't believe you can tell what her question is if we come to it to-night. It is a good question and it gave me a hard day's work."

"Thank you." Miss Fergus beamed in triumph and Tom pretended to feel crushed.

"I shall cough and say 'ahem' when your question comes up," he said. "You will know by the signal that I recognized the earmarks of your mind," Tom continued, mixing his metaphors recklessly.

John King smiled as if he thought Tom had promised more than he could do and as time had come to begin he called the class to order and began the reading rapidly.

Question. "Do you think foot ball is a good game for college students to play?"

"There are so many of the University boys here to-night," said John King looking around cautiously, "that I feel as if it would be more healthy for me to say yes. I shall say yes with proper qualifications. You know very well that I believe in doing everything to the glory of God. It does not make any difference whether it is teaching a Sunday School Class, preaching a sermon or playing foot ball. There is a great opportunity in a game of foot ball to develop courage, evenness of temper, quickness, generalship, in short very many of the best



qualities necessary to help a young man in the struggle of life. Some of the most promising, useful young men in the ministry, in medicine, in law, in business, that I know are men who took an active healthy Christian part in athletics while in college. A game of foot ball can be played by twenty-two Christian students in such a way as to be of great benefit to them. Yes, I think it is a good game for college students to play under these conditions. When it is made a professional exhibition for Thanksgiving day or made the occasion for gambling or betting or abused with brutality I condemn it as a college sport. But as a game in itself as it can be played and is played in many Christian colleges I believe in it."

Question. "Do you think it is wrong to dance?"

"Not if you dance to the glory of God. 'Therefore whether ye eat or drink or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.' If you can dance in accordance with that standard of human life go ahead. If it is impossible for you to dance and remain a pure happy growing Christian and if you feel that the dancing is keeping you and others from the Christian life of growth and usefulness then it is wrong for you. But does any one think he can dance to the glory of God?"

Question. "I know a girl who does housework for



a living. She is honest and intelligent. She belongs to a church and is a faithful member. She gives a thousand times more towards the support of the church services in proportion to her means than the rich banker who is also a member of the same church. Yet she is snubbed by the other girls in the church and Sunday School and is not invited out to socials or parties because she is a house servant. Do you think such action is Christian? Do you think the girl ought to do something else in order to gain the friendship of the other girls in the church?"

"No. In answer to both questions. The action of the other girls is pagan. There is no Christianity in it anywhere. But I do not believe the girl ought to do something else to gain their friendship. The friendship of such girls cannot be worth much if it is based on the condition of belonging to the same circle so far as an occupation is concerned. Honest labor is worthy of respect anywhere from anyone. There is no reason why a girl who works in a kitchen as a servant should not be treated with the same courtesy and regard if she is worthy of it, as the girl who makes her living in an office with a typewriter or behind a counter selling gloves or ribbons. One of Christ's most intimate friends was a woman who did daily work in the kitchen. Those per-



sons who disdain or despise another on account of the work they do for a living are very much in need of conversion, even if their names are on the church roll as members. They may be members of the church but they are not true disciples of the humble Carpenter of Nazareth who took upon himself the form of a servant and did the commonest acts of service that men ever perform in this earthly life."

Question. "I have always had a great longing to go on the stage and be an actress. Is that longing wicked? Haven't I a right to the life of an actress if that is what I was intended for?"

"Yes. The Lord wants us to be what we were intended for. It is one thing, however, to long to be an actress and another thing to be one. Perhaps no public career calls for more courage or physical endurance and intellectual gifts of a high order than the life of an actress. I am speaking of course of one who has the highest possible view of a profession. Doing it all like anything else to the glory of God. There have been some good examples of devout Christian women who have made the stage a profession. Charlotte Cushman was one of them. If all the actresses had her nobility of purpose and performance, going to the theater would be almost as religious and spiritual a duty as going to



the prayer meeting or a church service. If you are sure the Lord designed you to go on the stage, by all means go on. Perhaps after trying it you will find the public is not so convinced of your ability as you are. But in any case if you are convinced that you were intended to be an actress remember it was the Lord's design that first of all you should be a noble, pure, true, unselfish Christian woman. If you can be all that and make acting your life work there is no doubt you ought to be an actress. But can you be an actress to the glory of God?"

Question. "Do you think it pays a boy to work his way through college?"

"Depends something on the boy. If he has the stuff in him and is bound to go through college and get a thorough education he will generally do it. And when he gets to be a man he will always tell you it paid. I never knew a man who had worked his way through college, say that he was sorry. Of course it does not pay to break down in health trying to get through college. That is a bad investment. But supposing a boy has good health and other advantages, it pays to work his way through college. He will say so to himself when he graduates and goes out into the world."

Question. "Do you believe in a personal devil? And if so why?"



"I do. I never saw him but I believe in him. Why? Because I believe the Bible teaches us something more than an abstract impersonal influence called evil. Then I find a certain mental relief in thinking of a live being whom I am fighting. Those are a few of my reasons for believing as I do."

Question. "You have said so often that everything we do should be done to the glory of God. Aren't there some things we can do, without having anything to do with the glory of God and still be good Christians?"

"Name some of them."

John King looked over the room and as he sometimes, not often, did, he threw the question open for general discussion. Tom suggested in rather a subdued voice for him, "Mathematics."

"Well, if you do mathematics so as to know more, or to learn habits of exactness and discipline, may it not be to the glory of Him who has made for the first law of heaven, according to one great man, order?"

"I don't see where practicing the piano or washing dishes or making bread or any of those things has anything to do with glorifying God," said one of the class, a matter of fact girl who evidently disliked the things she mentioned.

"And yet there is a right and a wrong spirit to pos-



ness in doing even the common tasks of daily drudgery. A girl may wash dishes in a temper and injure herself in character seriously. I remember reading somewhere of a servant who lost a very valuable position in a nobleman's house because in a fit of impatience while washing dishes one day she broke a piece of china that had been in the family two hundred years. I have never forgotten the lesson which that little story impressed on my childhood imagination. If she had been doing her drudgery to the glory of God she would probably have been happy and careful in her work. It is so with anything. Pianos can be practiced, bread can be made, everything done as a part of life all of which is in the loving care and sympathy of God. Life is not divided up into the things that belong to God and the things that he has no interest in or right to. It all belongs to him. That is the true teaching of Christianity. That is what lies at the foundation of all society and of all individual life worth having. It is loving God and our neighbor with all the heart, mind, soul and strength that makes the exact difference between paganism and Christianity, between Sunday religion and every day religion."

Question. "What would you say to a young man who had begun to smoke cigarettes?"

"I would say don't. If I was a girl and the young



man thought a good deal of me I would tell him I could not endure such a habit in any friend of mine and if he thought I didn't mean it I would use my privilege as a woman to make him know that I did mean it."

Question. "Why is it that two boys brought up in equally good families with the same advantages and privileges will grow up to be so entirely different. One of them is gentle, courteous, refined, gentlemanly. The other ties tin cans to dogs' tails, tortures dumb animals, plagues his sisters, bullies other and smaller boys and creates a small riot wherever he goes. And yet both boys are the product of Christian civilization and their surroundings seem to be about the same."

"But probably their surroundings are not at all the same. I cannot answer your question without knowing something about the ancestry and home training of these boys. They take after their great grandfathers as much perhaps as after their own parents. The question of heredity comes in and cuts a large figure in any such question."

Question. "Don't you think people who do what they please have a more comfortable time than the folks who are always asking themselves 'Is this right? Is this to the glory of God?' "

"They miss a great deal of struggle and a good deal



of responsibility. Yes, I don't know but they seem to be more comfortable for the time being. But we don't see the end from the beginning. A man may have a pretty comfortable time in this world who does what he pleases and never asks himself 'Is this right? Is it to the glory of God?' But there is another world coming and the man will have to face that. We shall all have to be judged for the deeds done in the body on the basis of whether they were good or bad. The uncomfortable time will come to the man then. I don't know as we can say that a man has led a comfortable or an uncomfortable existence until we get to the Judgment. That will decide it very plainly. And even here in this world I never can believe that, take it all the year around, the bad or the immoral or careless man can be happier than the man who tries to do right and asks before he does anything 'Is it right?' It is fun to do right. There is peace and happiness in being good and making life happy for other people. Selfish people are not happy. They escape a good many responsibilities. But they don't know the deepest joys of life."

Question. "Do you believe the time will come when woman suffrage will be the law of the United States?"

"Yes."

Question. "If it is excusable in my brother to smoke



and drink and swear and do about as he pleases why should not society allow me, his sister, to do the same thing and excuse me?"

"Your brother is no more excusable for doing those things than you would be, and society has no right to make any distinction between an evil life lived by a man and an evil life lived by a woman. Both should be judged by exactly the same standard."

Question. "I don't like to go to the church prayer meeting but I go from a sense of duty. Do you think I ought to go feeling that way?"

"No. You ought to enjoy it. What is the matter? Is the minister dull and poky? Are the subjects talked about uninteresting? Are the prayers long and dried up? Could you do anything yourself to make the meeting pleasanter? Have you ever tried that? Or do you go to prayer meeting to be entertained and so feel personally disappointed because you are not? I don't like the idea of doing so many things because one ought to do them. If they are right and good there ought to be pleasure in them. A prayer meeting is the last place in the world to attend from a sense of duty. If it is not a pleasure I doubt the benefit you get from it."

Question. "Is the world growing better or worse?"

"Ahem!" coughed Tom looking over towards Miss



Fergus. She colored as if she felt annoyed at first, then she smiled and finally in her careless, good-humored way she laughed. The class did not know what the joke was, but John King suddenly threw the question down, saying, "I don't feel like trying to answer this now. It is getting late. Tom, you are wrong. I am the only person besides the questioner who knows the author of the question. I want ten of you to bring answers of one sentence each, next week. Five of the young men may give a sentence to show that the world is growing better and five of the young women a sentence each to show that it is getting worse. I shall have to get to my work again now. Good night to you all!" And the class after selecting the ten members to bring in the sentences, departed, anticipating the coming Monday and discussing the probable sentences. It was like John King to confine each one to a sentence. That would compel the deepest thought and concentration.

Victoria was in London at last. She had seen Parliament buildings and Westminster Abbey, had heard the roar of the Strand and gazed upon Nelson's Monument and St. Paul's and London Bridge and had gone as far on the Thames as the Tower and Richmond.

Most of her time however was fully occupied with



rehearsals and concerts. She was like all true artists, very conscientious and painstaking. She practiced three or four hours a day. Her public appearance had been greeted with great enthusiasm. She had instantly become a favorite. The manager was highly gratified. And Victoria felt pleased to think that she was doing her part to make the trip a success. After two weeks in London the company would go to Berlin and Paris, then back to England for a tour through the country towns, closing with London again.

At this time in her life Victoria was very happy. If it had not been for her sorrow at the thought of Victor she would have been, she told herself, the happiest person in all London. She wrote to Victor, getting his address from notices of theatrical news printed in the papers. She hoped to hear from him by the time she was in Berlin.

It was next to the last night in London that Victoria, coming off the stage after an encore, was sitting in the green room quietly as her usual custom was, going over her next music score, for she was on the program near the close, when she heard some one mention her name, "Stanwood."

Two English musicians who had been engaged to play in a Cantata given by the manager were in a



corner of the green room talking over items in an evening paper which one of them had brought to the hall with him. Victoria caught the words "Victor," "New Concert Hall," "New York," "Sensation," "Forgery," "Arrest," and she went over to where the players were and said, trembling, "Will you let me see the paper?"

One of the men with a stammering apology handed it to her saying, "Too bad, Miss Stanwood. 'Pon honor, we never thought you were here."

Victoria had no difficulty in finding the article in reference to Victor. Under large head lines it read somewhat as follows:

"Last evening just as Victor Stanwood, the well-known tenor at the New Concert Hall, was about to go on for his part in the program he was arrested on a charge of forgery. He resisted the arrest and seriously wounded the officer. He was overcome and landed in the Tombs at just about the time he ordinarily bows his acknowledgements for an encore. The affair has created a sensation among the Concert Hall people. It is claimed that young Stanwood forged a check on the manager. The details have not been made known."

Victoria read it through and then sat down. She



handed the paper back and paid no attention to the continued apologies of the confused players. She would have to go on the stage again soon. And Victor! The dearest person in the world to her was at that moment in a felon's position and possibly the man he had wounded would die and then—she shut out the thought as her heart beat wildly. The persons and things in the green room appeared unreal to her. She sat thus in perfect quiet, outwardly, it seemed to her for hours. Finally she was summoned for her turn and mechanically she rose with her violin and the next moment she was out on the stage, faces of people all about her, and the intent, eager, pleased looks everywhere of those who expect to hear the music of a master.



## CHAPTER VII.



AS Victoria began to play, the people felt a thrill of emotion as distinct and real as a shock from an electric battery. She had been playing now in London for two weeks. Every performance added to her popularity. Even in that great brick and mortar wilderness where every variety of music and every representative of the best in music and art and literature could be found daily and nightly for the pleasure seeker, Victoria held a place all her own.

Never had she played as she did tonight after the news of Victor's arrest and imprisonment. She came upon the stage with a great cry in her soul for help, for comfort, for consolation. The blow had come to her so suddenly she had not time to understand all its meaning. The minute she touched her instrument she seemed to ask it to satisfy her longing for deliverance. It breathed prayer for Victor and for herself. It sang to her hope and future peace. It is doubtful if during the ten minutes she was playing on that occasion Victoria was conscious of a soul in the world except herself and the spirit of the music. The selection



happened to be exactly in keeping with her troubled mood. But even if it had not been, it is probable she would have played anything with the same spirit of desire. No one but a music lover could understand what all this meant and the audience contained hundreds of beating sympathetic hearts that entered into the performance without knowing what occasioned it.

Victoria walked off the stage like a person in her sleep and as she disappeared the perfect silence was broken by applause so hearty and continuous that all the players and singers behind the scenes caught it up and Victoria in the saddest moment of her life was surrounded by the greatest expression of admiration and delight she had ever heard. She paid no attention, however. Her attitude was listless and depressed. She sat down and made no movement to go on again, although the demand for her reappearance grew more and more urgent.

The manager, who had been out during the first part of the program, had come in just in time to hear Victoria. He was astonished at her performance. He now came up to her and said,

"Miss Stanwood, the audience will not be satisfied after that unless you go on again."



Victoria looked up and replied, "I cannot go on again. I am not well." Instantly her mind had gone back to the first concert when she and Victor had made their first public appearance and she had refused to reply to an encore because the audience had not called Victor back. She felt in the same attitude now, only from a far different reason. She had played all she could that evening. She felt as if she could never touch her violin again. And if she had known that her connection with the company would cease that very moment she would not have gone before the audience again that evening.

The manager instantly saw that something was wrong. Victoria had always been extremely courteous and gracious to her audience and her refusal to appear now was due to something serious.

"Are you ill?" the manager asked quickly.

"Yes, yes, I cannot play any more." Victoria drew off into a corner of the green room and sat with her face in her hands. Some of the concert company gathered around her while the manager stepped out upon the stage. At sight of him the applause ceased.

"Ladies and gentlemen," announced the manager, "Miss Stanwood has been suddenly taken ill. I regret that she cannot appear again this evening."



There were many expressions of regret from the audience but the concert drew to a close and Victoria did not come on again.

Next day at her hotel in the presence of the manager and his wife, Victoria told them the news that she had received concerning Victor. The morning papers contained the same account, with the additional item that the officer who was wounded while making the arrest was in a critical condition. There were also some details concerning the forgery. The amount forged was two thousand dollars and the manager of the New Concert Hall was the loser to that amount, as Victor before his arrest had lost the entire sum in gambling.

Victoria was in an agony of shame and trouble, but the matter was public now and she talked it over with the manager with little attempt to conceal her real feelings. After all, she was highly emotional, though not nervous or hysterical.

"Two thousand dollars is a good sized sum for a boy like that to get away with so soon," said the manager.

"He gambles." Victoria said the words with a shudder. The manager had guessed as much, long before. He appeared very thoughtful over something but said little.



Victoria closed her London engagement that night and looked forward with relief to the trip on the continent. The company went over to Paris and it was while there that news came in fragmentary ways of Victor's trial and conviction. The wounded man recovered. Victor was spared the charge of murder in addition to forgery. The sentence was for three years and Victoria wondered if her brother would not kill himself or commit some dreadful act before he would allow them to put him into the prison garb. It seemed so horrible to her she could not believe it. It was not until long after that she learned how Victor had gone down so fast. The recital of it in detail would be a story by itself. She wrote to him after he was in prison. She never received replies. The chaplain, who at that time was a man of great good sense and knowledge of human nature, wrote her once or twice concerning him. There was little to say. Victor was strangely quiet and made no trouble. The chaplain said that in response to Victoria's desire to come and see him when she returned to America, Victor had not expressed either willingness or refusal to see her.

So Victoria with the sorrow of her life borne in the agony of self restraint went on with her work, and music was her salvation. Paris was a delight to her.



Berlin also. There were wonderful things to be seen in those cities. With all her sight seeing she continued true to her custom of visiting on every occasion the needy and suffering souls in the hospitals and asylums of those cities. The French and German hospitals for incurables heard the best music that had been heard for many years and many a foreign tongue in the long white wards blessed the little figure in black as it quietly and lovingly bent over the instrument and made it do its wonderful work of soothing nervous pains or lifting the depressed mind into a heaven of relief. Victoria always thought she played better in a hospital than anywhere else. It is certain that there was a quality about it that was lacking in her brilliant playing before great or fashionable audiences. Ugo Bassi has said that "God's angels watch over the strong and well while they sleep, but God himself watches at the bedside of the suffering souls who lie awake from pain." So Victoria seemed to give more of herself to the weak and sorrowful than to the powerful and happy.

After the return to London and a successful season there, the company sailed for New York. Victoria's reputation was well established and the manager on the way home made her a proposition to become a mem-



ber of a permanent symphony orchestra to be established and located in Chicago. The terms were liberal beyond Victoria's asking and she rejoiced as she accepted them at the thought that she could have a home with her father and perhaps recover him, under new and better home surroundings, from his degradation.

But there was one duty before her which she must perform before she went back to her old home. She must go and see Victor. The anticipation of that visit to the State Prison haunted her all through the ocean trip. Every day as the vessel swung through its invisible ocean track, unerringly pointing its bow towards the western continent, Victoria sat looking out over the mysterious deep of changing color and movement and she could not shut out the sight of Victor in the dress of a felon. She could not forget the vanity of the boy that had always shown itself in refinements of apparel. And she could not help believing that one of the most exquisite tortures to a mind like Victor's must be, not the shame of having committed a felony, but the shame of wearing the clothing of a common convict.

When the voyage was over, Victoria at once made her arrangements to go out to the prison. She reached



the place on Saturday and at once went to the warden's office and made known her errand.

The chaplain was present and was struck at once with the sight of the face and manner of the little woman whose name had become known so well in the musical world. He at once told her very frankly all he knew about Victor.

"To tell you the exact truth, Miss Stanwood, I am puzzled to know what to say about your brother. He gives no trouble but he will not talk. I doubt if he will want to see you."

"Not see me!" Victoria controlled herself with difficulty. "Does he think I love him any less for his—"

"I do not know, but whenever I have tried to mention your name or have given him your letters he has been as cold and unfeeling outwardly as a piece of stone."

"O Victor! Victor!" Victoria cried. She sat there in the warden's office where so much that was sinful and heartbreaking had come in and gone out all the years, and her cry of anguish went to add its burden to the rest. The chaplain was deeply moved.

"Go and tell him I want to see him!" she added after a pause. "I must see him! He is my brother. We were so close to each other once."



The chaplain went into the prison and was gone a long time. Victoria waited for him in the office. She thought he would never come back. Finally he returned with a grave and sorrowful look on his sympathetic face.

"Miss Stanwood, your brother refuses to see you. He says he would sooner die than have you look upon him. I received permission to let him come clothed in citizen's clothes, but he declares he will not see you under any circumstances."

Victoria received the news in silence. Then she said faintly, "I must go without seeing him. Tell him I love him as always. Sometime he will know that. He—"

She was going out when the chaplain suddenly spoke again.

"Miss Stanwood, I know something of your disappointment and sorrow at this. It is possible that he may relent or change. Cannot you wait over Sunday?"

Victoria hesitated.

"I will do as you think best. Of course I will wait if there is any possibility."

The chaplain thoughtfully looked at her. "I have a request to make of you then, Miss Stanwood. It may seem bold and unfeeling at this time, but of



course I know of your custom in playing on Sunday at the hospitals and asylums. Could you—would it be asking what you cannot do, to play at our services tomorrow?"

Victoria looked up with a flush of emotion.

"Will Victor be present then?"

"Yes, he sings in the chapel choir. That is one of the strange things about his case. I do not think he has spoken a word to any inmate of the prison in all the time he has been here. But from the beginning he has sung. The doctor, who has made a special study of his case, says it is the one thing that has kept him from going insane. I do not know. It is very peculiar."

Victoria replied simply, "Yes, I will play." She saw a possibility of touching Victor. Her longing to see him and tell him her love for him was greater than any other feeling. Besides, Victoria had never allowed her own troubles or sorrows to hinder her use of the instrument for other people's comfort. She was never selfish in her troubles.

So the next afternoon Victoria came upon the chapel platform with the chaplain and sat down just as the prisoners were filing in to their seats. There was a row of Chrysanthemums on the platform and



behind it the slender figure of Victoria was almost hidden, but she could see better than she was seen, and she watched the prisoners with a fascination that was horrible to her. The men marched in by squads and took their places very quietly. There were nearly a thousand of them. It was a terrible sight to her to think of all that life, most of it under forty years of age, stamped with the curse of banishment from the world for the transgression of man's law and God's will. She could not keep her eyes off the place where the choir sat, which was a little gallery almost opposite the chaplain's platform and screened by a curtain drawn part way up. When the prisoners below were all seated, a dozen men walked into the little gallery. Victoria shut her eyes and sank down, then she opened them and looked. At the distance across the chapel, which was an immense room, she could not distinguish Victor's face at first. Then she saw him seated as far apart from the others as possible. His eyes were gazing down and during the entire service, which began at once, he did not once raise them. Evidently he did not know that Victoria was there. The chaplain had not told any one for reasons of his own.

After a brief sermon the choir rose to sing. It was a remarkable performance even to Victoria, who



had heard the best music abroad. The men's voices were well trained, and if lacking in technical skill, still were sympathetic and well balanced. Victor's voice was clear and sweet as ever. But it was not until a solo part was taken up by him that Victoria realized the wonderful quality of tone power possessed by him. The hardened, brutal, stolid faces, nearly a thousand of them down there, representing almost every crime on the calendar, began to soften. As Victor sang on, some of the men bowed their heads on the rail in front of them. Others, older men, sat bolt upright with no attempt to conceal or brush away the tears that rolled over their coarse, crime-stained faces. Truly John King was right when he said, "What a pity! What a pity! That such power should be so abused by not being consecrated!" And Victor was certainly conscious of his supremacy over the emotions of those sinful men. Perhaps that was the motive that ruled his singing there every Sunday. The old vanity lived in him strongly yet, in spite of his shame.

It was certainly an inspiration on Victoria's part that the instant the choir had finished and sat down she arose and began to play. It was the place in the service for her but she had not arranged to begin as she did until she caught the idea from the selection



given by the choir. It was an anthem familiar to her, and the choir had given but one part of it, closing with Victor's solo and a brief refrain by all the voices. Upon the last note of this refrain Victoria began and with her own interpretation of the remainder of the music she swept on into a strain of perfect harmony, strong, pure, sustained. It was almost as if an angel chorus had suddenly appeared to preach to these lost, sinful men the tidings of forgiveness and eternal peace.

With the first note of the violin Victor had started up. He at once sat down again. His face trembled. He shook like one with the ague. Then he sat straight up and looked before him, every semblance of life driven out of his deathly look. The music poured out over the heads of those lost souls in the pit below him and every time the bow swept over the strings it seemed to tear his heart out of his bosom. Finally, he could bear it no longer. He started to his feet, stretched out his arms over the railing and cried out with a voice that was like the cry of a lost angel speaking from the borders of hell up to the ramparts of paradise—

“Victoria! Victoria!”

The bow fell all across the violin as the music broke and Victoria standing there with a sob in her heart and the tear on her cheek, oblivious of every one ex-



cept her brother, cried out to him across that living gulf of sin that separated them, "Victor! Victor! I love you!"

Back in the little gallery there was an instant commotion as Victor staggered and then fell forward in a faint over the railing. The chaplain dismissed the prisoners, who had sat in astonished emotion during this brief but sensational scene. With Victoria he went at once to the side of Victor. He was unconscious. They bore him into the prison hospital and that Sunday evening found Victoria sitting at the bedside of that erring soul as he lay in stupor. He had not recognized her since he fainted. He lay with his eyes closed and face turned towards the wall. And Victoria sat there praying that God would give him back to her. The doctor and the chaplain both came in several times before midnight. Near that time, while Victoria was left alone with him and no one else was within hearing distance, Victor suddenly turned and seized his sister's hand.

"Vi," he whispered, "I am a lost soul. I am living in hell already. It is no use. I can't be saved. I have suffered the tortures of the damned already."

"Hush, hush, Victor! God is good."



"Not in this place. There is no God here. Nor anywhere."

Victoria leaned over and laid her cheek against Victor's. She could not talk. She could not pray. She did what was the only thing left her to do. She made Victor feel her love for him.

He grew quiet and slept after awhile. In the morning he was sufficiently recovered to be able to go back into his cell. He insisted on this although the doctor said he might remain in the hospital. He parted with Victoria with more emotion than he had yet shown.

"I shall die here," he said as he let Victoria kiss him. "Or go mad. I almost did yesterday."

"Tell me, Victor!" cried Victoria as she clung to him sobbing, "Do you love me?"

"Yes," said Victor, but no tear revealed any emotion. "Yes, Vi, but my heart is dead. It will be better for you when my body goes with it."

"No, no, Victor, you are young. You have a gift of God. You must live in hope." She gave him one last kiss and embrace and he left her there, and with a heavy heart she went on her way to her father. Ah! sinful passion of the soul of man! What desolation is wrought by the selfishness of one disobedient heart! Truly the wages of sin is death. And it is a death



that lays its ruin on the dearest and the fairest and most tender objects of our affection.

The question class at John King's came in on the Monday night that had been the date for the sentences on the worse or better condition of the world, with a good deal of curiosity to hear the result of the week's thought on the question, "Is the world growing better or worse?" According to the minister's direction five of the class were to bring a sentence each, to prove that the world was growing worse, and five others to bring one sentence each to prove that it was growing better.

"I have the sentences all here in my hand and I will read them now before we take up the other questions," John King said. "I will read the worse questions first. You remember the young women furnished this side of the answers to the questions."

1. The world is growing worse because woman suffrage was defeated at the last general election.

"That," commented John King with his usual good nature, "Is what might truly be called a woman's reason."

2. The world is growing worse because there are more diseases known to medical science than there were ever before and especially in what is called civilization.



3. The world is growing worse because the love of money was never so widespread as it is today.

"How does she know that?" asked Tom.

"Please excuse the interruption," continued John King. "I did not mean it."

The class laughed at Tom's expense and King went on.

4. The world is growing worse because crime and criminals are steadily on the increase in the best country on the globe, that is, in the United States.

5. The world is growing worse because that is what it must do, to fulfill the prophecies of the Bible, which declare that wicked men and seducers shall wax worse and worse deceiving and being deceived.

"Now for the other side as presented by the young men."

1. The world is growing better because it contains every year more hospitals and asylums for the sick and sinful and unfortunate.

2. The world is growing better because human life is of longer average duration than ever before.

"How does he know that?" asked Miss Fergus.

"I got it out of a dictionary of scientific facts," replied Tom.



"That settles it," said John King gravely, and he went right on.

4. The world is growing better because the differences between nations are now settled by arbitration, which used to be settled by war.

5. The world is growing better because Christianity is a historical fact, and if there are not more good men and good things in the world than formerly, Christ's life and teachings must be a failure, and that in the nature of things, is impossible.

"Now then, there you are," quoth John King. "Next week suppose we take a vote on the merits of these arguments. We must pass on to the questions now, as our time is brief."

Question.—"How much of a man's income ought he to spend for his own personal pleasure?"

"Whatever is necessary for the development and growth of a child of God. This is a hard question to answer for another person as well as for ourselves. There are some large principles to go by. We are never justified in spending money for personal pleasures that make us more selfish or forgetful of the world's needs. Only those pleasures are right and harmless that leave us better fitted in body, mind, and soul to advance the Kingdom of God. On that great



general principle we must work our own details conscientiously."

Question.—"Is it right to be pleased with one's own good looks?"

"Yes, I think so. Pleased, but not vain. A person can be happy to think he has a good straight body free from disease or disfigurement. That is a natural feeling and no harm in it. But when it comes to standing before a mirror and admiring ourselves, if that is what you mean, I should say it was done a good deal, but I don't know of any good to come of it."

Question. "Why do so many good people have such disagreeable manners?"

"Because they are not as good as they ought to be."

Question. "Suppose the man who lives next to me is five hundred dollars in debt through no fault of his own, is sick and unable to work and has a large family. Suppose I am in good health, have a fair income, am all out of debt and have five hundred dollars in the bank. What is my duty towards the man who lives next to me?"

"I don't know all the details in such a case. If the man has no one else in the world to help him except you, it is plainly your duty to help him out of his trouble with your five hundred dollars. How much of it



you ought to use in helping him will depend on other things. Suppose there are ten other men in the same condition, all dependent on you for help, you can't give them all five hundred dollars apiece. Suppose you have a family yourself dependent on you, the divine law tells you to take care of your family. There might be circumstances in this supposable case of yours when it would be your duty to let the man next door to you have the entire five hundred. There might be other circumstances that would make it wrong for you to give him a cent of money. The Bible says, 'whosoever hath the world's goods and seeth his brother have need and shutteth his compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?' The plain teaching is that we are to relieve all the suffering we can. Do all the good we can. Not hoard up money. Not be selfish. I don't think any man with good health and five hundred dollars in the bank and a heart ready to do the will of God and anxious to love his fellow man would be plagued very much to know what to do in such a case. He would do something any way, if his neighbor was dependent on him for help. And as I say, he might use the five hundred dollars for him or he might not. In any case he would have compassion on him and help as far as possible, that is, he would if he had the right thought



of bearing the burdens of the weak and not pleasing himself."

Question. "Why are people of genius so apt to be queer and odd and do such outlandish things different from common people?"

"Because they are geniuses, I suppose. That's one of the penalties of being born great. They will always be different from other people. And then they say that geniuses are only another kind of crazy people, and that would account for their queer actions."

Question. "The papers said that one of the recently elected governors of one of the states spent seventeen thousand dollars to get the election. If that is true, what do you think of it?"

"If it is true I think it is simply a tremendous argument against the spoils theory of office holding. A man cannot honestly spend seventeen thousand dollars to get elected to anything."

Question. "Who is more to blame, the man who sells whisky or the man who buys it?"

"The man who sells. The man who buys it is to blame, too, but not so much as the other."

Question. "You said a few weeks ago in a sermon that you thought the Sunday paper was on the whole a



bad thing. What is the best argument against the Sunday paper?"

"The best argument is that the Sunday paper compels the civilized community to keep up the same contact with politics, fashion, sport, gossip, and crime all the week. It does not allow the community to pause and give it breathing or resting for something else and different one day in seven. Close on the heels of the Sunday paper comes the Monday morning paper and thousands of civilized people are saturated with newspaper. They think newspaper and eat newspaper and dream newspaper. They don't read anything else or take time to let their minds lie open for twenty-four hours for something entirely different. One of the best uses of Sunday is rest from the world and the things of the world. The Sunday paper destroys this rest. It breaks in on a man selfishly after having been at him all the week and says, 'Read me some more!' All that most preachers ask of people is about two hours of Sunday. But the Sunday paper insists on claiming at least four or five hours of the people's time on Sunday. That's what I call the best argument against the Sunday paper."

Question. "Would you advise a girl not to have anything to do with a young man simply because he



smokes, if he is good enough in every other respect? What should she do?"

"Smoking is not a crime. It is, as I think and as this girl evidently thinks, a bad habit. I would not advise the girl not to have anything to do with the young man if he is good and pure in every other respect. If that last clause is true, the girl has a good chance to win such a young man from smoking if she dislikes it and he knows it. If I were she I would plainly let him know what I thought of smoking. He will respect her all the more for her frankness in telling him what she thinks. And if he is really good and pure and values her respect or even if his feeling should ever grow into something deeper, if he is good and pure he will break off the habit for her sake. Smoking is a useless, expensive, and worst of all, disagreeable habit. The good, pure young man has no more right to indulge in this disagreeable habit than the good, pure girl who asks this question. Suppose the girl ask the young man sometime, 'What would you think of me to see me going down State Street puffing a cigarette or cigar? Would you want to continue my acquaintance?' No, I cannot say to you, Don't have anything to do with him. But let him know that you dislike the habit and if he still keeps on with it, it will look very much as if he thought



more of his smoke than he does of you and you ought to be glad that it never went any farther.

"That ends the questions this evening," said John King closing the box and after the usual social chat the class departed.

When Victoria reached Chicago again she went at once to the old home. Her father was still there. He was evidently glad to have her back. Victoria noted with deepening sorrow the signs of growing dissipation in his face and figure. Her means were now such that she was able to move into a more desirable house in a better part of the city. She also persuaded her father to give up his theater engagement and succeeded in getting a few pupils for him. Her own reputation helped her to do this. For the next three years the history of Victoria was a history of constant public triumph in her profession and of secret anguish over the home life of her father and the position of Victor. At last the term of Victor's imprisonment expired. In all the time of his imprisonment Victoria had written to him and also visited him. In all that time he had maintained his stubborn silence with the other prisoners and the prison officials. Victoria wrote him when he was released to come at once to her. Some public engagement had prevented her going to him. She had



sent him money to provide liberally for his expenses. But the weeks went by and Victor did not appear and he did not write. Victoria in her heart of hearts felt the anguish of the situation and longed for the brother and imagined all kinds of possible fate for him.

She had come home from the Symphony one evening at this time, after an enthusiastic reception from a magnificent audience and was sitting alone and waiting as she often did for her father to come in, when she heard the bell ring and went out herself to answer the door. There stood Victor. She knew him at once and with a cry of joy and a sob she dragged him into the house with all her love for him as strong as ever. He was plainly moved but did not show it in any demonstrative way. His face was hard and old. Otherwise he had the same jaunty self-satisfied look. After several questions concerning his movements, Victor said speaking slowly and doggedly,

“I can’t get anything to do. I sang in a church in one town for five dollars a Sunday. When they found out who I was they told me to go. Everybody knows me here. But I thought I would make a strike and come.”

“Father has been holding that money for you, Vic-



tor, that mother left," Victoria said timidly. She was surprised at Victor's apparent indifference. He said—

"I don't need it just now. Vi, there is just one thing I want. I want a chance to sing again. Either in John King's church or with you in the Symphony. But I'm a felon! A convict! My career is ruined!" For the first time he showed signs of breaking down. Victoria kneeled beside him. Her mind was in a whirl of conjecture. Would John King let Victor come back? Would the manager engage him to sing solo parts in the Symphony? Or would society now brand him as an outcast? She asked it as she kneeled beside him who was at that moment the dearest person to her in all the wide sinning, suffering world.



## CHAPTER VIII.



AFTER a while Victoria said speaking slowly,

"Victor, what do you want me to do?"

"I want you to use your influence with the manager or with John King to get me a place again."

Victoria shook her head sadly.

"I'm afraid it will be impossible."

"I don't know why. My voice is just the same,"  
Victor spoke fiercely.

"You know that society passes its verdict on—"

"On convicts, for life! Yes, once a convict always a convict!"

"Don't, Victor!" Victoria spoke with a shudder. Then she added, "I will do all in my power to help you. Do you want me to see the manager?"

"Yes, and John King. If he believes as he preaches he ought to give me another chance."

"I will see him, too," said Victoria quietly.

"When?"

"I will go tomorrow and see the manager."

Just then the father came in.

He was surprised at the sight of Victor. The greet-



ing between them was awkward and constrained. Victor was sullen and said little. He complained of being very tired and after a little went off to the room Victoria had been keeping ready for him.

In the morning Victoria went to see the manager. She at once made known her errand.

"You remember my brother Victor? He has served out his time and is in the city. He wants to go on the stage again. He wants a position in the Symphony—"

"What! With a state prison record! I beg pardon, Miss Stanwood, but we must talk plainly about this."

"I know, I know," replied Victoria in much distress. "It gives me unspeakable pain to think of it. Still, could it not be possible for my brother to secure a position in some way? I am convinced that his future depends on his getting some large place where he can sing to the best people."

"That may be true. But it would be out of the question for him to come on with the Symphony. His prison record is too fresh in the public mind. It would be an insult to the public to announce him now."

Victoria flushed.

"Even if he were entirely reformed?"

"Even if he were entirely reformed. But is he?"

"He says little. He is very anxious to get back into



his old place as a popular singer. Is there no hope for him?"

"In time, yes. But not now. It would simply kill us all with the public to put him forward."

"And yet his voice— Oh, you should hear it. His voice will surely win its way with the people. They will forgive anything when they hear him. Surely the people will treat him kindly for my sake."

"There are the other performers. How will they take him?"

"I hadn't thought of them."

The manager was thoughtfully silent. At last he said as if he were having a debate with himself—

"I am under great obligations to you, Miss Stanwood. And I am willing to do this. I will engage Victor for one week. I have little doubt that the result will be disastrous, but that is my lookout. Send him to me. I want to see him and talk with him."

Victoria was surprised but she did not say much. She dreaded to go back to Victor without some hope to give him. The manager's unexpected offer relieved her. She did not have quite the same fear of results as he had. She thanked him heartily and returned to Victor.



"The manager wants to see you," she said to him without giving details of the conversation.

When Victor went into the manager's office he was alone. He at once said;

"Mr. Stanwood, you understand the risk I run in giving you a position on the Symphony. This is a matter of dollars and cents with me. I have agreed to give you an opportunity to sing for one week. I have not heard you sing since the night of the concert. I have the right to ask you to favor me now. I run all the risk of offending my public but if I do so I wish to have some excuse in your voice. There is the piano. Will you play your own accompaniment or shall I?"

"I'll play my own," said Victor shortly.

He went over to the piano and sat down and at once began to sing.

There was no mistaking his wonderful gift for anything ordinary. The manager was a man of the world and he knew that such voices were very rare. When Victor had finished, the manager remained thoughtfully seated by his desk. At last he said plainly,

"You have a remarkable voice, young man, and if it wasn't for those three years in the pen I would be lucky to get you at any price. But you know that makes a difference."



Victor stood biting his lip and nervously beating his foot on the floor. "Yes, I told Victoria once a convict always a convict. Has that anything to do with my ability to sing?"

"No, but it has something to do with your reception by the public," said the manager coolly. "However I will do what I promised. Give you a week. It will probably cost me a pretty penny but—" he smiled a little grimly, "I will make the public pay most of it."

He made terms with Victor who soon went away and when he was fairly out on the street the curtains at the end of the room parted as they had done several years before when Victoria played, as she thought, to the manager alone, and several gentlemen came into the room.

The manager's friends were very free in their criticisms.

"A most unusual voice."

"A remarkable rendering of a simple piece of ballad music."

"It will be a great risk. The public will resent it."

"Why, everyone knows Stanwood's history. It will make trouble in your company."

"No, it won't; the public will forgive everything for the voice."



"I wouldn't risk it myself."

And so on. Some opposed, some condemned the manager's action in making the engagement with Victor, but all without exception praised his great gift.

Victor was to appear the first night of the coming week. The public soon learned of the engagement and a tremendous house greeted him as he made his appearance. The daily papers had devoted large space to his career and refreshed people's minds on the facts of the forgery and the assault of three years ago. There seemed to be a variety of opinion as to the purpose of the manager in hiring this attraction. But the first two nights Victor sang to crowded houses and with considerable favor from the audience. The third night however there arose a difficulty. The lady who had played his accompaniments came to the manager just before the curtain was to rise and told him she would not play. She had just learned the full facts in regard to the new tenor. The manager was expecting anything of the kind and was prepared for it.

"Very well," he said, and sent for Victoria.

"Miss Stanwood, will you play for your brother this evening?"

Victoria saw what the trouble was and instantly replied;



“Yes. We will go on together. I am ready.”

When the time came brother and sister came on, Victoria with her violin for she preferred to accompany Victor with that instrument instead of with the piano. Victor understood why she was obliged to do so. His face was hard and pale. Nevertheless he did his part splendidly. The audience was enthusiastic. Brother and sister were called back. There were people in the city who understood and sympathized with Victoria's story and the present situation.

But when the Symphony was over that night Victor abruptly went to the manager and said,

“Cancel my engagement!”

“Why? What is the—”

“I cannot stand such things as those to-night. I heard what Madam W. said to you.”

“It is what you might expect.” The manager spoke with some bitterness. Then he added with some feeling, “I was in hopes you might live it down. There's half a dozen of the company however gave notice to-day that they should quit. The public is all right. It's the fastidious people on the stage that object—”

“To a convict!” said Victor with a hard laugh. He went home with Victoria, enraged at all the world. It took the manager a long time to recover from the disas-



trous effects of that experiment. With some people he has never recovered from the disgrace of putting a convict into the Symphony.

The next day Victor announced his intention of going to see John King.

"I don't want you to go, Vi," he said with a nearer approach to his old time affection than he had yet shown. "I have asked too much of you already. I will look after myself."

So in spite of Victoria's earnest and loving willingness to do anything for him, he went alone to see John King.

The preacher happened to be in his study alone. He greeted Victor just the same as if those three years with all their disgrace and agony had never been. Victor was nervous and at once made known his errand.

"I want to sing again in your church, Mr. King. Can you take me back?"

John King looked at him with a serious but not sad look peculiar to his face.

"Of course you know the effect on the public of your prison record?"

"Yes, sir. I know it well enough."

"You know that such a feeling is strong in my church?"



"No, sir, I don't know it."

"It is. I doubt if my organist will play for you. I am speaking very frankly to you now."

Victor flushed. He recalled the scene with John King when he had resented the preacher's talking to him about gambling. He also recalled John King's words, "The time may come when you will need a friend. When that time comes if you will come to me for any help I can give you it will be given as freely as the love I have for you this very moment." Instinctively his proud soul went out for help just now. He had the greatest longing to get back to his former place with the public. The great gift of his voice was just beginning to be truly seen by him in something of its true meaning. More than all, his great vanity was as strong as ever. He felt that if he could only once get a hearing his voice would triumph over prejudice.

"I have never forgotten your promise to me, Mr. King. That time I left the church."

"Yes?" John King's face lightened up eagerly. "Well, it is still good."

"I am in great need of help." No one can understand what it cost the vain Victor to say those words. John King leaped up to them like a redeemed soul



launching itself out on a storm wrecked sea after a lost soul.

"I will do what I can for you. There are a great many things to take into the account. For my part I will welcome you back to sing. I may have difficulty in making others see it as I do. But you shall sing next Sunday morning on my responsibility. Stanwood, has not your experience brought you into a desire for a Christian life?"

Victor trembled. If the bell had not rung that moment, followed by a hurried knocking at the study door he might have yielded his proud soul up like a child to his Father. The interruption sent him away however with only this definite impression on John King's mind—that the experiences of the next few days might determine the future of a very sensitive and selfish nature.

When Sunday came Victor went to the church and entered the choir room by the side door. What John King had done in the two days that preceded Sunday since that interview in the study Victor never knew until long afterwards. The facts of the morning's experience in church however may be briefly described.

There was at the time in John King's church a mixed chorus choir under the direction of the organist. When the hour for service arrived perhaps half the



members of the choir were in their seats. The organist did not appear. John King waited a few minutes and then in the midst of a deadly stillness over the great audience he went to the organ himself and played the voluntary.

The service went on as if nothing unusual was taking place.

The hymns were sung and just before the sermon Victor came out and sang. John King stepped back to the organ and played the accompaniment for him. The effect of Victor's voice was the same it had always been. There was perhaps an added power because of the tension under which the entire strange service was being conducted. The anthem by the choir was omitted. The sermon was one of the best and his prayer breathed tender love for all mankind. In a great church like his there were however very many people who condemned his action in inviting Victor to sing and considered it an abuse of privilege and a mistake in every way. From the results of that, King felt the effects in some way all through his after ministry in that place.

At the close of the service when John King went back into his room to get his hat and coat, Victor met him and said,



"Mr. King, you have done your part. Made good your promise. But I can't stand it. I can't sing under these conditions."

He was rushing out when King reached out an arm and detained him. "Let me help you in any other way I can, won't you?"

Victor for reply wrung the hand held out to him and went out at once and that was the last time he ever sung in John King's church.

He went home and told Victoria.

"I'm an outcast! A felon! The world has kicked me out. I might as well die and be done with it!"

Victoria was in an agony for him.

"No! No! Victor, time will bring all right again. You must live in hope. You must try where you are not known."

"Yes and as soon as I am known, I shall be kicked out."

He brooded about the house for several days and at last one day he suddenly asked Victoria for the money that belonged to him and which the father had kept sacredly for him while he was in prison.

Victoria told her father and he at once put Victor in possession of the entire amount. Victor did not reveal his plans to any one. He took the money and was



gone several days. Then he came back and Victoria who welcomed him gladly thought his manner towards her was more affectionate than at any time since the old times. He remained with her and the father and gradually his manner grew more like that of the time when he first began to sing when Victoria left him. He began to dress extravagantly. He was often away from the house for days together. He said little about his doings. But Victoria although absorbed in her profession and unusually busy at just this time, felt her heart sink within her as she slowly came to the conclusion that the old gambling passion was asserting its sway over Victor again, and out of her heart went a great prayer for deliverance.

It was at this time in her life that Victoria met Richard Bruce and Tom Howard and also became a member of the Question Class.

Richard and Tom were in charge, under King's directions, of a mission work down in the slums. They had a boy's brigade, some night classes in book-keeping and shorthand and had long been wishing to start music classes.

The three were talking it over one day when John King said,

"Boys, it just occurs to me that Miss Stanwood of



the Symphony will give us one or two nights a week. The Symphony plays only three nights."

"Whew!" said Tom. "That's all right. But where are we going to get the shekels to pay for such talent?"

"I think Miss Stanwood will play for the love of it," said John King.

"Yes, she goes to the hospitals every Sunday and gives free recitals," said Richard.

"Suppose we ask her if she can give us an evening or two."

So John King went to see her and at the first mention of the proposed music classes Victoria heartily consented. At first she gave one evening a week. Later she gave two. She became intensely interested in the work. Once a month she arranged a musical and with the assistance of her friends and the co-operation of Tom and Richard she filled the hall used by the church for part of its institutional work with a great crowd of the most needy and music hungry people in all the city. She was delighted.

Getting acquainted with Tom and Richard thus, she was drawn into the Question Class, which was a source of great enjoyment to her whenever her public engagements would permit her to attend. Victoria lived a singularly retired and quiet life for one who had



gained such a high place as a musician. Her father's condition required her presence at home a great deal. He was growing worse and lately he had had symptoms of failure of all his physical powers. So that at this time in her life Victoria saw very little of society except the little gatherings of the Question Class and her fashionable audiences at the Symphony and her unfashionable rabble at the music classes in the slums and her friends in the hospitals. The Question Class was a relief to her heart and mind under all the strain to which she was subjected, and whenever she had opportunity she always attended. She was specially interested in the questions the second time she was present and made up her mind to bring in a question herself at the next meeting.

"The first to-night is as follows," John King announced as soon as the class had quieted down from its usual social prelude.

Question. "When is the best time for a girl to try to reform a young man? Before she marries him or after?"

"If he is not reformed before, it is very doubtful if he ever will be after. It is to my mind a great mistake which many girls make when they think that they can reform a bad man by marrying him. Let me read you



a little article recently written by Marion Harland on this subject. She says, 'My heart aches when I think of the women who began the work of reforming with hope and laid it down with despair at the end of life that made them turn weary arms to death with a sigh of welcome. On the table before me stands the portrait of one such woman. When she was a merry hearted girl she fell in love with a handsome, brilliant young fellow whose only failure was a fondness for liquor. He loved her deeply—better than anything else in the world except drink. Nevertheless he promised to overcome even this passion for her sake. In vain did her family plead and protest. Her only answer was, "He cannot keep straight without someone to help him. I must marry him now. He needs me."

'A few years after her marriage she died of a broken heart whispering at the last to a dear friend that she was not sorry to go but would be thankful that life was over if she were only sure that her son would not be left to her husband's care.'

"It is very seldom that a girl reforms a man by marrying him. It is an awful risk to run. I cannot safely advise any girl to run it."

Question. "To what extent should we praise and honor one person above another because of the greater



talents of the one, when we consider the pride that honor above others engenders and the consequent want of due praise to God the giver of the talents on the part of the individual?"

"No one should be honored or praised above another because of greater talents. That is no reason for giving such honor to anyone. If a person has greater talents than others he should humbly give God, the author of every gift, all the praise, and humbly ask for wisdom to use the talent to His glory. There is a great deal of false hero worship in the world. I do not believe in bowing down to a man because he is a great author or a great musician or a great preacher or a great foot ball player, unless there is something in the way of character or moral force in him to warrant my respect and esteem. No. Praise and honor should never be given people of great talents simply because of the talents. Especially when such praise makes the person vain and forgetful of God. Let us have less hero worship. The present age knows all sorts of superiority without discrimination. Society gapes in admiration at the great prize fighter and the great poet and the great preacher and the great politician and the great millionaire without much outward distinction. The New York papers that praised Dr. Parkhurst for his splendid fight against Tammany



and misrule contained in the same edition the same number of columns of sickening praise of the great prize fighter Corbett. Away with such hero worship. All true praise belongs to Almighty God and should not be bestowed on humanity except as it represents him in character and in service."

Question. "Don't you think people eat too much on Thanksgiving day?"

"Some people do. And then they are sorry for it afterwards, as I suspect the writer of this question is."

Question. "What is the most important part of a church service?"

"That depends on several things. Sometimes one part, sometimes another. It depends on the person also. One man thinks the sermon is the most important part. He gets more out of that than from anything else. Another man gets more out of a prayer or a hymn. That is the most important part to that man. One part of the church service ought not to be so overwhelmingly important that the other parts are of little account. I have had a man in my church ask me to omit the prayers and the scripture reading and come at once to the preaching. That was all he cared for, he said. But there were other men in the church who received more help from the prayers and music than from



the preaching. Every part of a church service should be important and at different times and with different people each part will be at some time perhaps the most helpful and important."

Question. "Ought not all Christians to unite for the overthrow of the increasing drinking and drunkenness and the entire liquor business and the gambling and the oppressive combines and trusts and all such like evils?"

"Yes. And until they do so unite in a true Christian union those evils will continue to grow in power. A united Christendom is the only answer to the world's wickedness and the only remedy for its evils."

Question. "Will the resurrected body bear any resemblance to the earthly body; the youth's resurrected body to the youth's earthly body; the child's resurrected body to the child's earthly body; the aged person's resurrected body to the aged person's earthly body?"

"I don't believe we can tell. 'God giveth it a body as it pleaseth him.' It will be a spiritual existence in the resurrected state. Whatever form the resurrected person shall bear we know this much. The form will be glorious, free from disfigurement, weakness, pain, and sickness. And more than all, I am convinced that whatever God pleases for the resurrected body will com-



pletely satisfy us whether it be in regard to our own selves or in regard to the children, the youth, or the old people who have gone before. More than that we may not know as yet. But that ought to be enough."

Question. "Are there any degrees of sin? In God's sight is not a little sin as wrong as a great sin?"

"Yes, I think there are degrees of sin. It is not as great a sin to tell a lie as to commit murder or assault on another man. The effect of sin is not so disastrous in the one case as in the other. There are infinite degrees of sin. And a little sin cannot be as wrong as a great sin in God's sight for if it were, then the little child who is guilty of being cross or deceptive would have to be classed with the man who had committed all the crimes known to the law breaker. This is true. All sin is hateful in God's sight. All sin is wrong. What we call little sins He undoubtedly calls great and would have us shun with horror what we often do with little thought. But that does not mean that He regards all sin as equally wrong."

Question. "How can a young man who is very much in love tell whether the girl cares anything for him or not?"

"I should think one way to find out would be to ask her."



Question. "Is it Christian to wear mourning for the dead? Or is it in accordance with Christ's teaching not to observe the common custom of wearing black? What did he teach about it?"

"He did not teach anything as to wearing mourning for the dead and it is my opinion that such a habit is not required by the Christian religion. I do not want my friends to mourn for me in that way or to put crape on their doors or on their hats. There is one large city in the United States where it is the custom to keep the curtains down and the blinds shut in the windows of the front room for a year after the death of one in the family and during all that time no one of the family is supposed to accept any social invitations or leave off distinct mourning apparel. This is the custom among the people of style and influence. Whatever else that may be, I cannot believe it is Christianity. Christianity fills us with hope of eternal life. Death is not the awful gloomy thing the pagans made it. There are a great many pagan things in our civilization yet and among them I call wearing mourning dress, one."

When the class went away that night Victoria asked if she might send in several questions at a time in case she was not able to come every week. John King read-



ily granted her leave, saying the class would relax the strictness of its rules in her special case.

It was during this week that Victoria's father began to grow worse and finally his symptoms became so serious that Victor and herself spent days and weeks of watching by his side. It was at this time also that Victor began to borrow money of her, at first in small sums, then after a little in larger amounts, until Victoria was unable to let him have what he wanted.

One day at this time she had been to see the manager on a matter of business and he had spoken of her careworn anxious appearance.

"You are working too hard. You need a vacation."

"I cannot leave father now. He needs me. But I wish Victor could get an engagement somewhere. I am worried over him."

"Ah!" thought the manager as he glanced keenly at the determined but somewhat pale and drooping little figure in black. "So there's your greatest trouble, eh? Miserable young scamp. After all that's been done for him by nature and by his sister!"

Victoria was going out when the manager called her back.

"Miss Stanwood, do you remember that two thou-



sand dollars you paid me three years ago for that violin?"

"Yes." Victoria waited wondering a little.

"Well, I have never spent that two thousand dollars. In fact I have never cashed the check."

The manager said this in the most matter of fact tone and pulling out a small drawer in his desk he produced the check with Victoria's endorsement on the back.

"It's good yet of course," said the manager quietly as he handed it over to the astonished Victoria.

"The fund is still in deposit with accumulated interest for three years. And I'll tell you what I would do. I would draw out a thousand dollars and get Victor to go abroad with it and secure a place somewhere. He is getting into bad ways again here."

"Oh, sir!" Victoria almost broke down, "I have feared it of late. But if he could get a position. I am sure he has ambition. But his old habits—"

"Well, that's what I say," said the manager gently. "Get the boy to promise to get a new start. Let him have a part of this. Yes, I insist on your taking the check back. I acted like a brute at the time the violin was smashed and I never meant to take anything from you for it. I knew if I didn't pretend to take it that



precious brother of yours would get it in time. And besides, Miss Stanwood, I happened to know that you have saved from your earnings to pay that two thousand dollars on the forged check in New York. The manager lost it through Victor, and you paid it back. I call that pretty plucky. Not many people would have done it."

Victoria flushed. She had never told anyone. The manager had heard of it from some New York friends.

"And so I want you to take this money back. You need it just now, don't you?"

"Yes," replied Victoria frankly. "And if I can persuade Victor to secure a place abroad I am sure it will be the making of him."

"Of course it will." The manager was as enthusiastic over the plan as a boy. He loved anything that had a plot in it. "You go and draw out a thousand dollars to-day. Have the money ready to hand to Victor when he comes home. Will he be home to-night?"

"I think so. Yes, he has been regular lately."

"Good! Then lay the plan before him. I will give you a letter of introduction to parties in Berlin and London to give him. The affair is not very well known on the continent. Oh, we can manage it all right."

The manager's enthusiasm gave Victoria new hope.



He sat down and wrote the letters and Victoria, feeling as if in another dream took them and the check and went out.

She drew out a thousand dollars in bills of large denomination and went home. She knew Victor well enough to know that the sight of the money would impress him. She would appeal to his love for her. She would call on his ambition, she would even touch his vanity to save him and then she would give him the money and show him what a new chance it opened to him to go abroad and secure a position where his prison record would not follow him.

She thought this plan all over that evening as she sat by her father in the absence of the nurse who had been excused for a day or two on account of a death in her own home.

The night grew about her and it was very late and still Victor did not come in. Victoria was very tired. She had lost a great deal of sleep. The clock struck one and she knew that she was still awake. Then she thought she heard the half hour. She must have dropped off when the clock struck two, for the next sound she heard was one stroke of the half hour. She shook herself and rose to look at the father. As she did so she heard a noise in the next room which was her



own. She instantly stepped to the door which was nearly closed and pushed it wide open. The electric light was burning there and the figure of a man was stooping over the desk where she kept her writing materials and into which she had placed the money brought home that evening. The noise she made caused the figure to rise hastily. There was no other way to leave the room except by the door, where the man stood. Before she had time to utter a word the light fell full on the man's face and she saw it was Victor standing there, with the package containing the money held fast in his right hand.



## CHAPTER IX.



ICTORIA walked straight up to Victor and said,  
“Victor, what are you doing?”

As she spoke his fingers nervously opened and the package of money fell upon the floor. Victoria stooped and picked it up and during the conversation that followed, stood between Victor and the door, as if she feared he might attempt to go away before she could talk with him.

“Were you going to steal this money?” Victoria asked the question with a feeling of indignation at Victor’s act. For a moment she had no feeling but scorn for him.

Victor looked this way and that. He was so completely surprised that he had no defense to make. He had thought Victoria was sound asleep. She had not awakened when he passed through into her room. At last he said in a low voice—

“I am in great need of money!”

“And so you steal mine!”



"I have not stolen it. I was just going to look at the package."

"Do you know how much money there is here?"

"No, I tell you, Victoria, I never counted it."

"There is a thousand dollars. Do you know what I was going to do with this money?"

"No, I didn't know you had so much."

Victoria was calmer now after the first agitation. Her heart ached as she began to think of the misery Victor was suffering from his own evil life. She came closer up to him and said, trembling with feeling—

"Victor, I drew this money out of the bank to-day on purpose to give it to you on condition that you take it and go abroad to get a position where you can sing in some country where the story of your trouble is not known. Tell me, Victor, do you love me? If you do, you will take this money and use it to redeem your past. The manager has written letters of introduction to friends in Berlin and London and they will be of very great help to you. O Victor, Victor! My heart is breaking to think of the life you live! My own ambition is almost gone. If it were not for father and the need of keeping on I should be ready to break down. If you love me Vic, for the sake of the dear mother who was so proud of you—"



Victoria looked down suddenly. She threw herself into a chair by the writing desk and burying her head in her arms, sobbed and cried so violently that Victor could not endure it.

He stood irresolutely a moment, then falling on his knees by the side of his sister he threw his arms about her and cried almost as when he broke through his pride in the prison.

“Victoria, Victoria, I do love you! I am the most miserable being on earth. I don’t deserve such love as yours. I am living in a constant hell, Victoria, I will kill myself. Then I shall be out of the way and you will not be troubled with me any more!”

Victor’s passion once expressed was so violent and unrestrained that Victoria was terrified. He continued to pour out a perfect torrent of self reproach as he kneeled by Victoria. He almost shrieked in his excitement. Victoria felt her own feeling subside. At last she was able to say, “Victor, it is wicked for you to talk so. Do you want to fill my whole life with horror? Or do you want to start a new career from this night and go on to grow into a happy, useful man?”

“O, I will do anything, Vi! Only let me try away from here. Can you love me after all this?”

“Of course I can, Victor. The past will be past to



me. It all rests with you to make me perfectly happy. Assert your manhood. Break away from this gambling passion. With your great gift you can make your place in the world and be of so much service to mankind. And I would be willing to slave all my days to help you if—”

“I know it, I know it, Vi! I learned of your paying up the New York manager. Oh, I have been a brute! I have been a brute! I have not much hope for myself.”

“Promise me, Victor. Start out from this very night. You are young and strong. You have everything in your voice. Let the past be forgotten. Live it down. And then after you have won distinction and honor come back and we will all welcome you into a happy life with us here.”

Victoria spoke with enthusiasm. She saw that Victor was deeply moved, more so than at any time since his first downward step. Victor listened sadly and when Victoria ceased he continued to kneel there by her with his head bowed and his whole attitude one of the deepest shame and remorse. They were both roused by a cry from the other room. The father had been stirred out of his half stupor, half sleeping condition by the noise. Brother and sister went into the other room and stood by him.



Victor was shocked at his father's appearance. He whispered to Victoria,

"How long has father been like this? Isn't he much worse?"

"He has been this way for more than a month. The doctor fears paralysis." Victoria spoke quietly but she had long been accustomed to think of the time when her father would be a helpless invalid.

"Is that you, Victor?" the father suddenly spoke, struggling with difficulty to make himself heard.

"Yes, father," said Victor putting out his hand and laying it on the sick man's.

Mr. Stanwood seemed anxious to make a great effort. Twice he seemed incapable of making any intelligible sound. Then Victor as he bent over caught the words, "Love your sister. Do as she says." He fell back exhausted and lapsed into his customary semi-insensible condition. And those were the last words that Victor ever heard his father speak.

The boy was thoroughly aroused, for the time, out of his selfishness. He insisted on remaining to care for the father while Victoria lay down to get the rest she so much needed. In the morning there was no change in the sick man's condition. The doctor came and said that



he might live in the same condition for weeks or even months.

"I ought to stay and help you bear this, Vi," he said when the two were talking over the future plans.

"No, Victor, you can help me more by doing as I said last night. You see," continued Victoria with a sad smile, "how much I depend on you for keeping up here."

She talked with him for an hour. He seemed truly repentant. He was more like the old Victor than she had once hoped for. During the day he yielded to Victoria's plan so far as to go out and make some arrangements for his trip abroad. Victoria placed all the money at his disposal. She felt that she was safe in doing that under the present condition of Victor's mind.

Within the next few days Victor gave every evidence of being true to his first impulse for a new and better life. He followed Victoria's directions in preparing for his trip abroad, her own experience proving of much value to him. And at the end of the week he was all ready to leave for New York. His leave taking with Victoria was pathetic to her because all his old jaunty, self-assertive, vain air of manner was entirely gone. She had never seen him so thoughtful, so humble. In her heart she rejoiced at it.



"Write me from New York and again the minute you land in London, Vic."

"Yes, I will. I don't feel right to go and leave you to take care of father." Victor had parted from him with the sorrowful picture of the broken-minded old man trying in vain to speak. Already the paralytic affection prophesied by the doctor had gained control of his tongue.

"It is best this way," Victoria answered bravely. "Remember, dear Vic, I have put faith in you. Don't disappoint me, will you?"

He went away brushing the tear from his cheek with those last words of the great hearted, loving little sister echoing in his heart, and as Victoria, the tears flowing over her face, watched him until he was out of sight, she sent after him the most longing prayer she had ever uttered that he might redeem his broken past. It was the turning point with him. The crisis. It was well worth all the sacrifice of money and affection if the life could be saved. And she turned back from the window to take up the burden of her home sorrows and her public professional career with the quiet courage that was becoming every day more and more characteristic of her.

The month that followed was a busy one for her.



In that time the father's condition grew steadily worse. He was a helpless paralytic and required constant attendance. Victoria was able to secure the best of nursing for him but with her public duties she could not bear to leave the invalid entirely to the care of hired strangers. She spent hours herself by his side. The father showed his affection for her in various ways. It was at times more nearly like that of a dog than of a human being. Victoria was repeatedly moved to tears by it.

Her music classes in the slums and the Monday night Question Class, however, gave her a needed change and rest from all this strain at home. One Monday evening she was invited to John King's to dinner and among the half dozen guests besides herself were Richard Bruce and Tom Howard, with whom she was coming to have a pleasant acquaintance through their mutual interest in the slum work. There was a table full of interesting people and the talk turned on books and authors and writing. Victoria knew very little about the world of letters and she was eager to know more of all sorts of life in other directions. She had never heard Bruce talk very much. She had read one or two of his stories in the *Monthly Visitor* with which he was connected but she had never read any of his longer



efforts and was a little surprised when something said by King revealed the fact that Richard had just finished a novel of three hundred pages.

"Richard must be getting wealthy by this time," said John King, with a twinkle of his great dark eyes in the direction of Tom. "This is his fourth book in as many years. Dick, what do you do with all your money? I don't see where it all goes to."

"It all goes to the publishers," replied Richard with a smile.

"That's so," said Tom. "There's no money in writing books, that is, for the author."

"How do you know, Tom?" asked King.

"Why, didn't you people know that I was the author of a thrilling novel entitled 'The Pen is mightier than the Ink Stand?' I have sent it in type written manuscript to fifteen different publishers and they have all read it with such force that I have been obliged to have it retypewritten two times. I pay the postage and they do the rest."

"I should like very much to read your book when it comes out," said Victoria demurely.

"May I put you down for a copy, Miss Stanwood?" said Tom without a quiver of his countenance. "The book will be sold by subscription only. Plain cloth \$1.75.



Half calf \$3. Full grown calf \$3.50. Morocco \$5. Let me call your attention, madam, to the table of contents. Full copper plate steel chiseled engravings, copies from the old masters taken with a Kodak on the spot, 600 pages of the most thrilling descriptions of life around the North Pole on the Fourth of July. Book will be ready for delivery by freight or express any time after Christmas 1912."

Tom rattled off a lot of lingo made up in imitation of the traveling book agent and after the laugh had ceased King said, "I suppose it is true that there is not any money for the author in a book unless it has an exceptionally large sale. I understand that 10,000 copies are considered a good sale for what is called a popular novel. Is that so, Dick?"

"I have heard so. It is certainly true that an author can work longer and harder than almost anyone else and receive less for a year's work in proportion to his labor than the average day laborer."

"Give us an illustration, Dick, out of your own experience."

Richard hesitated. He very seldom spoke of his own work or its remuneration. But a glance around the table showed him a group of his nearest friends



and for once he broke his professional reserve and said frankly,

“Well, I will let you into the story of one of my stories. It took me eight months of hard work to write it. Of course during all that time I was not earning anything by my labor. It cost me thirty dollars to have it typewritten, as publishers will hardly look at handwritten manuscript these days. Then I sent it off to a publisher by express at a cost of a dollar and a quarter. It was gone two months and was sent back. I expressed it at the same expense to another house with the same result. The manuscript came back to me after three months’ absence. There were thirteen months gone without a cent for my labor of brain. The third publisher to whom I submitted the book accepted it on these terms. He would publish, advertise, and put the book on the market at his own expense and give me ten per cent royalty on the list price of every book sold after he had sold a thousand copies. I received this offer just fifteen months after I began the story. I accepted it. The manuscript had then to be revised and sent back and forth several times for correction of proof, each time with expense to me. Before the book was out of the press, five more months had gone by. And at the present time just two years and three months have



elapsed since I began that story and I have not received a cent from it yet. I shall not get anything from it until the one thousand and first copy is sold and then only ten per cent for work that I did over two years ago. Meanwhile I have had to live all these months. Of course if I did not have a salaried position on the *Visitor* I would starve writing books at that rate."

"But don't you sometimes sell a story outright for cash down?" asked Victoria to whom all this was a revelation entirely new.

"Yes, but not very often. And when I have done so I have never received more than four hundred dollars for eight months or a year's work. Of course if one is famous as a writer he can make his own terms with his publishers. But the men in this country who can do that can be counted on the fingers. We common writers could never make a living at writing. We are obliged to have a salaried position or starve, as the old English poets in Grubb Street used to do unless they were fortunate enough to get a rich nobleman for a patron."

"I should think the outlook was discouraging to young authors."

"It is," replied Richard, "if a writer expects to make money. An author must write from other motives if he is only average. At the same time I contend that no



work is so unevenly paid for considering the time and thought put into it as that of an author. Good average brains will not earn as much food and clothes and comforts as good average muscle. The average carpenter or mason or railroad employe can make more in a year than the average story writer."

The talk led out into a discussion of the rights or the wrongs of the statement by Richard and after a little the guests adjourned to the parlors for the Question Class.

"I feel a little like criticising your questions to-night," remarked John King as he took out the first one and unfolded it. "How can I give a good answer to a poor question? It takes as much wisdom to ask aright as to answer. However I won't be too severe. Only some of you must not be disappointed at your answers to-night. The fault lies in the way you have put it, some of you."

Question. "Why do more women than men unite with the church?"

"Because there are more of them to start with. Then there is more time given in very many Christian homes to the religious training of girls than of boys. And besides all that, a false theory of life has made very many parents believe that a boy cannot grow up as good



as a girl, that he must be a little wild, that it is natural for him to sow his wild oats. There is a difference in the sexes on the emotional side. A woman is more easily excited to tears or tenderness than a man. Some people think a woman is by nature more trustful and more inclined to believe in religious truths than men. I don't believe that myself. I think the reason more women than men are found in churches lies back in the past false training of boys and girls in Christian homes. The double standard of morals and of conduct is responsible for most of the difference between men and women religiously."

Question. "You said awhile ago that you believed foot ball was a good game for college students to play. Is not the game on the whole brutal and degrading as shown by the recent spectacles of games played between large college teams in New England?"

"I have somewhat changed my mind since answering the question some time ago. The manner in which representatives of some of the great colleges have played the game is a disgrace to all true courage and manhood. If I were president of one of those colleges I would use my authority to stop such brutality. Hundreds of the spectators at one of these games said it was the most disgusting exhibition, no better, no more elevating



than a bull fight or a prize fight. Many a Christian business man vowed he would take his son out of an institution that encouraged such sports. Yes, the game is in danger of being ruined with the American people unless a speedy stop is put to its professional black-guardism. The game can be played decently. That it has so often been abused of late is exceedingly unfortunate. But no college can afford to encourage anything that turns its students into raving, maddened animals for an hour on Thanksgiving Day."

Question. "If a man is out of work, has a large family dependent on him and cannot get work of any kind and is in need of food, fuel and clothing for himself and family, what had he better do? Beg or steal?"

"There is nothing criminal in begging. There is in stealing. If I were that man myself I would of course beg for my family before I would steal for them. Stealing would cause them more misery than ever and if I were caught and put in jail for it some one would have to beg for them. In a choice between two courses like this there ought not to be any hesitation. It is a dreadful position for a man to confront but committing a crime will not better it any. It will always make it worse. There ought not to be such a possibility before any man. That there is such a possibility before many



a working man in this country and the world to-day, ought to make all you young people do some hard thinking and doing, the result of which will make such conditions less common in the future."

Question. "Is the use of whisky, brandy, wine and beer absolutely necessary in a great many cases as it is claimed, for medicinal purposes? Why does a state that has prohibition laws need to permit unlimited drug stores to sell liquor under the law, as medicine? Isn't it bought in most cases for a beverage just the same as if bought in a saloon?"

"There is a city of less than fifty thousand people in a prohibition state where thirty-five drug stores have permits to sell intoxicating liquors for medicinal and scientific purposes. One month the sale from these drug stores amounted to over six thousand. That is to say, six thousand or more persons most of them apparently able-bodied men, claimed that they needed anywhere from a pint of whisky to three bottles of beer for rheumatism, malaria, cold, sick headache, and weak stomach. For all these ills that flesh is heir to, intoxicating liquors was the only sufficient remedy. It simply means of course that in that prohibition state the people have elected to have special saloons disguised as drug stores. As for the need of liquor as a medicine



I have never believed in it and the necessity for it is very much exaggerated. There is a hospital in a city of the old world which is run on strictly total abstinence principles. Not a drop of alcohol in any form is ever given to a patient in any case. It is claimed that the cures from this hospital exceed those of other hospitals where alcohol is used as a medicine. Recent arctic explorers who have gone into the frozen north farther than man ever went before, have not taken a drop of liquor with them on their journeys and they have endured the cold as well as others who have carried whisky and brandy with them. It has been proved in the German army hospitals that beer drinkers are far more liable to die of gun shot wounds than abstainers, and steps are being taken to prevent so much drinking in the army. I would be willing to risk it myself if all the alcohol on earth were destroyed as a medicine. I never felt the need of it. But other men seem to be so sickly that nothing but three or four weekly or monthly visits to a drug store can keep them from dying of some dreadful disease."

Question. "Will the time ever come, do you think, when the tyranny of fashion in very much of woman's dress will give way to something more comfortable and sensible?"



"I hope so. And not only woman's dress but very many fashionable and absurd articles of men's clothing, tooth pick shoes for example. I hope none of you young men ever wear those tooth pick shoes?"

There was a shuffling of feet in the room as of several pairs of shoes being drawn under chairs and some of the girls looked expressively around but John King did not appear to notice. He smiled and took up another question.

Question. "Would you advise young people to read very much fiction?"

"They ought to read some fiction. If you mean, ought they to devour love stories or detective stories or exciting French novels of course I should say no. But fiction of the right sort is always good reading. It is as natural and healthy for a young person to read a good novel as it is to look at a beautiful picture or admire an artistic grouping of color."

Question. "I really cannot afford to buy any Christmas presents this year. I owe other bills. I haven't paid for my winter hat. But if I don't get presents for some people they will think I am stingy and mean. What is my duty? Ought I to buy Christmas gifts unless I can afford to?"

"I was in a Boston store one day just before Christ-



mas time and among the crowd of shoppers I saw one nicely dressed woman who had her arms full of bundles smiling and chatting with another woman who had just come in.

‘Ah, you have your hands full,’ said the new comer.

‘Yes, I had to buy at least ten dollars’ worth of presents for people I don’t really care about. Great nuisance, isn’t it?’ She went away laughing and the other woman said to a companion, ‘Do you know, to my positive knowlege that woman owes her dressmaker ten dollars and her poor sewing girl has been repeatedly to her house and cannot get the money. And yet she thinks she is celebrating the birth of Christ by getting those people she doesn’t care for ten dollars’ worth of presents while the dressmaker probably needs the money to buy food and fuel. It’s a shame!’ Shame indeed! Celebrating the birth of Christ! No, I should say you have no right to buy Christmas gifts if you cannot afford it or if other people who have need of the money are going to suffer from your foolish extravagance. It is wicked to celebrate Christmas that way. A good deal of the mad rush in the stores at Christmas time is as pagan as if Christ had never come into the world at all. You can show your love for your friends without causing distress and indebtedness you ought not to incur.



The beautiful simple custom of exchanging some little token of affection has become degraded into a great mercantile opportunity by the holiday trade and in much of it Christ is not only forgotten but directly disgraced and misrepresented to the world."

It was this week that Victoria had a new experience that brought a new factor into her life and must be related now. She had been to the Symphony and had played before the usual fashionable, richly-dressed, brilliant audience. The Symphony was unusually well attended that winter. When she came out it was beginning to rain and she took a cab. She usually rode home with one of the other ladies who sang in the company and who lived not far from her on the north side. But to-night she happened to be going the other way and Victoria was alone. It was about eleven o'clock. When the cab drew up to the river there was a little delay for some reason and the cab stopped on the bridge. Victoria sat back looking out through the mist at the lights on the river and humming over some strains of the evening's music. She felt happy and hopeful. Victor had written her again telling of his engagement to sing in a good London company. She had received the letter that morning. Her success in the Symphony was gratifying to her. She had won her place with the public



and she felt assured of the future, financially. Her heart was light and the world seemed not such a very bad place after all, even as she saw it dripping and dirty through the window.

Finally the cab moved on the bridge a little farther and then stopped again. There was some delay about the draw. Victoria lowered the window a little on the side away from the rain and put her head out a little. As she did so, she saw a girl. She might have been eighteen or twenty years old, standing on the foot passenger's bridge looking down at the river. The light from the cab lamp and the brighter rays from one of the bridge lights brought the girl's face into full view. She was very pretty. There was an unmistakable daintiness and purity about her that attracted Victoria and something in the lines of the countenance that reminded her of her old invalid friend, Aura.

But more than anything else that touched Victoria was the complete look of despair and desolation and utter hopelessness on the girl's face. Victoria had been in the slums, she had stood by poor creatures in the hospitals, she had even become well enough acquainted with the struggles of the sewing girls to understand the depths of despair to which they often sank. With all her affectionate sympathy her heart went out to this



stranger. The resemblance to Aura intensified her feeling. It was not necessary to tell her that here was a human being in need of human love and shelter. She might be even now thinking of taking her own life. Victoria thought of all this suddenly as she swiftly recalled the fact printed in the papers only a little while before of a girl who had thrown herself off the end of the very draw bridge where she now was.

All this took but a few seconds. Victoria was not a woman of senseless or foolish impulse but she was a woman grown now, with a growing longing in her heart to do good in the great world. She yielded to the God-given impulse that told her here was need of a living love to save a despairing soul and, opening the door of the cab she stepped out, and asking the driver to hold the cab there a minute swiftly crossed over the short distance between her and the stranger and touched her on the shoulder.

The girl turned around and, trembling, faced Victoria. There was no mistaking the divine sympathy that made Victoria's face as beautiful as an unfallen angel's. With one bound her soul had leaped that cold wide gulf that separates people who have never met through the formalities of social custom and the girl



knew that there was human love and sympathy in the world yet.

Victoria said simply,

“Dear, you are in trouble. The good God made us both. I once had a friend who had a face like yours. For her sake I want to help you. Will you let me? Come! Let us get into the cab. There is a God and He is good.”

The girl uttered a great sob. Then she clutched at Victoria's arm as if she were falling, falling down some hideous gulf and then as if in a dream she allowed Victoria to half lead, half carry her to the cab. Victoria entered behind her and shut the door. And once within, the girl went into the most violent hysterics. Victoria kept her arms about her. The cab moved on. When it reached the house Victoria succeeded in getting her rescued soul into her own room. The rain began to pour down in torrents. It beat on the windows like the spirits of defeated demons. And Victoria kneeled by the side of her bed, by the side of the drenched form of the stranger, drenched and beaten like a storm-beaten Easter lily, and prayed for her as angels pray, looking down with tears upon the mighty sorrow and suffering of the wicked cities of men on the earth.



## CHAPTER X.



AS the night wore on, Victoria grew alarmed over the condition of her charge and sent her father's nurse out for the doctor. When he came he succeeded in quieting the girl but the shock to her system from exposure and the subsequent reaction due to Victoria's rescue of her led to an illness which lasted nearly a month. During the latter part of that time Victoria learned a part of her strange history and in the weeks that followed the girl confided to her all the story of her brief but eventful struggle for existence.

Her name was Rachel Brooks. It was the same old story of genteel poverty in a proud family living in a small town. Rachel had endured it as long as she could and at last when matters in the home had reached a crisis she had come away to the great city determined to make her own living and be independent of every one. She was a beautiful seamstress and at first succeeded in getting work in a large establishment where more than fifty girls were employed. She might have succeeded in providing for all the necessities, small



as her pay was if she had not been taken ill after being in the city a few months. The close confinement, the long hours, the insufficient and coarse food at the cheap boarding-house, the homesickness, the lack of friendly acquaintances all wore upon the girl's sensitive spirit and one day she lay down tired out in her little room under the roof of the boarding house and when she came back to full knowledge of her surroundings she had been ill with fever for two months. What little money she had been able to save was gone for doctors and medicines and attendance. Her place at the establishment was lost. She wandered over the city seeking for work. Her pretty face, even more delicate and refined since her illness attracted notice, and shame be it said of human kind, insult. She grew desperate. There was no help to come from home. Why did she not hunt up some good Christian people, go to some church, tell her story to some one of the many benevolent societies in the great city? Surely there are always in Christian America numbers of warm loving Christian homes and hearts ready to rescue such souls as hers. Yes, but how get the two together? Rachel was lost in that great whirl of humanity. The eager haste and indifference of the world smote her with desolation. It was a time of great distress for the working wage earning



world. Hundreds of girls like her were hunting for places. At one establishment where she went in answer to a small advertisement she saw in a paper, she found seventy-five eager, anxious applicants. At last her boarding mistress refused to give her any more credit. She had sold every article of any value she possessed and given the money she received to her landlady and that afternoon had left the house. She had no plans. In telling her story to Victoria she could not recall where she went. Near midnight after having walked probably miles without anything to eat, without protection from the cold rain, with a fire of despair eating into her soul she came upon the bridge. She had been there some time before Victoria touched her. In that time the draw had swung around twice.

Once she had been at the end next the water when the bridge swung open. She had thought wildly of the peace and rest that might be found at the bottom of the river. Her brain was on fire. Her body reeled and trembled. She was drenched with the cold, remorseless rain. She was looking into Hell within and without. There was no God any more. And no heaven. And no love in the world. The universe was a great curse and life was a part of that curse.

It was just then that Victoria had touched her



and spoken to her. If an angel had appeared to draw her up into the bliss and warmth and rest of heaven, Rachel could not have clutched him with more eagerness. As she turned and took hold of Victoria it seemed to her as though she had already jumped off the bridge and the cold black water would roll over her forever unless she seized this unexpected deliverer. So she clung to Victoria like a drowning person. For the time being Victoria was God to her. A miracle. And the poor soul sank into the weeks' illness that naturally followed such excitement, conscious all through it of the gentle loving face that bent over her and nursed her back again into the warmth and love and faith she had come so near losing forever out of her heart.

One day as she was sitting up and growing stronger with every breath in the atmosphere of Victoria's strong cheerful presence, Rachel said,

"I must be getting out to look for work soon. I shall never be able to repay you for your great kindness to me." Her eyes filled with tears and over her face began to steal the old anxious look as she looked forward to the renewal of the struggle for existence.

"You are not going to leave me at all. That is



all settled. You are going to stay here with me until I tell you to go," Victoria spoke with authority.

"But you have your father to care for," faltered Rachel, whose heart could not resist the longing to accept the haven of rest which Victoria lovingly offered her.

"You can help me care for him. You must not say another word. You have come to me in such a way that nothing could satisfy me except your making this your home." Victoria went over and put her arm about Rachel. The girl yielded to her with tears running over the pale face, and from that hour a great friendship dated, which death itself cannot sever, for it is of those friendships that belong to the endless life.

After that it seemed to the friends as if they had always known each other. Victoria's father took a wonderful liking to Rachel. She was the gentlest, most thoughtful nurse. Although for a long time she was not strong enough to do the work of a professional nurse she rendered service in other ways such as a hired stranger would not generally give. The most perfect understanding existed between her and Victoria. After a time Rachel found a position and had the satisfaction of being financially independent.



That was after Mr. Stanwood's death. But before that she remained at the house, seldom going out except once in a while to accompany Victoria to a Symphony. She was passionately fond of music and her love of Victoria was increased by a certain worship of her great gift with the violin. As for Victoria she came to love the soul she had saved with a love that grew every day. Rachel was like a younger sister. The heart ache of Victoria over Victor's wasted and broken career found some soothing in the complete devotion Rachel showed. Since Aura's death hers was the only life that had come close enough to satisfy her longing for companionship.

One Monday night Victoria took Rachel to the Question Class. She was shy and a little reluctant to go, but her sweet face pleased the company and after the first awkwardness she enjoyed the easy informality of everything. There was no more eager listener that night than Rachel. It was all so new to her and one or two of the questions touched her very closely. John King began as usual with a little preliminary talk, to take out the questions from the little olive wood box on the table.

"We are behind on the answers and as I understand some of the class are impatient to hear their



questions taken up I will condense the answers to-night. You must remember that I am not trying to give you complete answers at any time. They are mostly suggestive."

Question. "Do you think it is right for the government to spend three million dollars in building a great war ship when the same amount of money would give ten times as many persons necessary employment and produce things that we need a great deal more than war ships?"

"A good many Christian people think that it is absolutely necessary for the United States to have a large navy in order to preserve the peace and dignity of our country at home and defend the rights of our citizens abroad. I do not hold that view myself, as I believe that great standing armies and navies are a source of constant drain and enormous taxation on the people of a country and the money spent in equipping and maintaining them is to my mind unnecessary. So I do not believe this country needs to spend three million dollars on a war ship so much as it needs to spend it on something more useful and urgent, demanded by the human misery and poverty of the times."

Question. "If goodness is mightier than evil, why does evil appear to have the upper hand?"



“Appearances are deceitful. We do not see the end from the beginning. And that is the reason evil appears to have the better of the world. Then again wickedness gets more free advertising than goodness. Every daily paper eagerly prints accounts of crimes. Crimes are news. Good deeds, daily virtue, temperance, Christian homes, truthfulness, honesty, the papers don’t print long columns about these every day acts. They are not news. They are too common. The church does a thousand good deeds that the world never hears of. Evil seems to have it all its own way. But it is temporary. The devil is not superior to God. He is not even His equal. He is inferior. And in the great end of all things he shall be finally overthrown.”

Question. “Not more than one out of every five young men in the United States is a member of a church or an attendant on church services. Is that a proof of the weakness of the churches or what?”

“A proof of the weakness of the young men, I should say. The church has a good deal to answer for, but I don’t believe in loading all the responsibility upon her. The greatest reason why four out of five young men are not in any way connected with the church is because they prefer to belong to other or-



ganizations or to none at all. They do not want to give up their vices or their selfishness and become disciples of the lowly Christ. It is just as true now as it was in Christ's own life time. Men will not come unto Him that they might have eternal life."

Question. "Should our love for God be like our love for our earthly friends?"

"Yes. God is a father. We are His children. How else shall we love Him? The love we have for Him should be like that we give our earthly friends only greater in degree. For we owe Him more. He has done more for us. He is able to do more for us in the great future. Our love for our earthly friends where it is pure and true is just like the love we should have for God. Don't you remember Christ said to those who had visited the sick and fed the hungry and ministered to the sinful, 'For as much as ye have done it to one of these least (human beings) my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' Love for humanity is an expression of our love to God. God is not so different from us that he must be loved in a different manner. He is a father. He is like us. We are like Him. We have the same likeness. We are made in His image. Love is not two things. It is eternally one and the same. And whenever we love



with unselfish, pure, joyful love one of our earthly friends we are at the same time loving God. There is no other way to love Him."

Question. "What is Hell?"

"The Bible speaks of Hell as a place, just as it speaks of Heaven as a place. It also speaks of it as a condition of the soul, a condition of rebellion and of misery, brought about by a refusal to do the will of God. Hell is the absence of God in the soul whether that soul be in any particular place or not. Hell is a condition where the soul is out of harmony with the will of God."

Question. "Is it Christian for society to spend so much time and money in pleasure?"

"It certainly is not Christian to spend so much time and money on pleasure as some people in society spend. Pleasure is right and God wants us to have happy, joyful times, but it certainly is not Christian for people to go night after night to receptions and parties and theaters and balls and concerts without ever visiting the poor, caring for the distressed, or helping lift the burdens of a sinful world. I know a woman who moves in society a good deal who was asked one day for her membership fee to some benevolent organization to which she belonged. 'Oh,' she said to the vis-



itor who had come for the money, 'I really cannot pay that now. I cannot afford it. You will have to come again at the end of the month.' The next caller was a lady friend, and the society woman began to show her three new dresses that she had just received from New York. The least expensive of them cost one hundred and fifty dollars. That evening with two friends she attended an opera at an expense of four dollars and a half. When the poor humble visitor calls for the five dollar fee at the end of the month that society woman will give it to her but she will feel as if it was so much money thrown away and she will at the same time feel as if she had done her part for the benevolence of the district and proceed to spend five dollars for something she doesn't need just because it is pretty. There are hundreds and thousands of people in this city who spend their whole lives in going to parties or entertainments. If they go to church they do it because it's fashionable. If they go to visit the poor they go because it is a fad to visit the poor. Their whole lives are given up to pleasure. If such a use of time and money is Christian then I do not know what Christian is. Of course it is not Christian. Think of the sewing girls getting less than three dollars a week wages, living in



attics, going to ruin because of the devilish competition of the money makers, and then ask yourself if God has not some other and higher uses for humanity and money than the wicked waste of them in selfish pleasures day after day. This is the righteous condemnation of much of society, that it is not spending its time and money where it is most needed, but on itself in a continual round of personal pleasures that do not relieve the wants of the world nor make those who seek after pleasure any better able or any more willing to relieve distress or make the world better. Society will have a good deal to answer for at the last great day, not for being criminal or licentious or brutal or wicked, but for an awful waste of two of God's most precious gifts, time and money."

Question. "Isn't it true that money can buy almost any thing?"

"No. Its power is very limited. It can't buy the most valuable and beautiful things in the world. It cannot buy brains, nor common sense, nor virtue, nor character, nor forgiveness of sins, nor love, nor eternal life, nor peace of conscience, nor freedom from death. The purchasing power of money is exceedingly limited. It can buy a great deal that is good as well as a great deal that is bad. It can build churches as



well as saloons. It can build colleges and endow them as well as erect houses for gambling and vice. But it is powerless to buy the endless things that depend on the eternal character of man. The power of money is seen by what it cannot buy, not by what it can buy."

Question. "Is a Christian necessarily perfect?"

"No. That is not the definition of a Christian, if by Christian you mean a person who never does anything wrong, who is sinless. A Christian is one who is trying to be like Christ. He is constantly growing better. But he is not necessarily as good as he can be now. He has a great deal to learn and is far from perfection."

Question. "What do you think is most in need of reforming in the political life of our country?"

"The intense partisanship, which gives rise to a host of evils like the spoils system and unholy alliances with the whisky power and the great trusts in order to gain party votes. If it were not for the narrow partisanship of our political life we might have some hope of municipal reform and a getting together of all good men regardless of party for the common good. But as long as church members and saloon keepers and gamblers all go to the polls and vote the same ticket, what is going to be done to purify the body



politic? And as long as men go into political life for the spoils of office and regard a good fat salary in the public pay as so much just reward for their political services, where are the statesmanship and patriotism which alone can preserve a nation in righteousness? The horde of hungry office seekers at every change of state or national party administration is a living illustration of one of the greatest evils of our political life. And it all comes from a partisanship that puts success of the party above every other consideration. There are thousands of men in this country who believe more in their party than in their church. They will give more money and more time and more enthusiasm to their party than they ever give to their church. It can be truly said of such men they are more partisan than Christian."

Question. "How do you account for the increase of lynch law in this country?"

"A great deal of it is no doubt due to a growing contempt of the courts and a feeling of distrust as to justice being done owing to many failures to convict and punish the guilty. Then there is also without doubt a laxness among the people, especially in some sections of the country which is due to a lack of self restraint taught by Christian training. In very



many sections, the religious influences have of late years been fewer. The black and white in large regions are growing up in ignorance of pure Christianity and foreign immigration of the lawless element has added to the peril already existing. There is no remedy for this state of things except a complete regeneration of society through the Christianizing of it in every particular."

Question. "Should a young girl from fifteen to seventeen years old keep company with a young man regularly?"

"A young girl from fifteen to seventeen years old ought to be keeping company with a good high school or academy or college. A young girl of that age who is regularly thinking about the young men or allowing them to keep regular company with her ought to have some good advice from a good mother or father. Or if she has good common sense herself she will see that she ought to be giving her undivided attention to an education, or if for any good reason she cannot go to school, the time between fifteen and seventeen ought to be used as years of preparation for the duties of home life. Of course there are exceptions. Women have been courted and married at seventeen and have made excellent wives and mothers, but as a general thing with the average girl or young woman it



is quite safe to say that between fifteen and seventeen she ought not to be keeping regular company with any young man. She ought to be giving the strength and thought of those years to intellectual development, undisturbed by sentimental or foolish or premature love affairs."

Question. "How much of my income ought I to give to benevolence?"

"How large is your income? What are your obligations? How much do you owe? Who is dependent on you? I don't know your circumstances. I cannot answer your question definitely. You will have to determine the amount yourself from a consideration of all the facts in your own case, your ability, your opportunities, your responsibility. If you have a large income you probably ought to give a good deal."

Question. "What is the greatest temptation to young men in this age and country?"

"The temptation to place physical and intellectual or political or financial power in the first place in his ambition to become some one or do something. These are four great gods of the national world most young men fall down and worship. And the greatest temptation before them lies in their worshiping these powers so constantly that they forget the God of all the



earth and heaven, their relation to him as immortal souls and the value of the spiritual as compared with the temporal. The great temptation to all young men lies along this particular line. The exaltation and glorification of the material and the ignoring or despising of the spiritual or eternal."

When Victoria and Rachel reached home that evening Victoria asked Rachel how she enjoyed the Question Class.

"It was splendid!" replied Rachel with an enthusiasm not commonly shown by her.

Victoria was pleased.

"I thought you would like it; the people are so interesting, too, when you come to know them."

"Who was the gentleman we met when we first went in? The one who was talking with the minister?"

"That was Mr. Bruce. He is quite a famous author."

"And his friend, as you said, the one whose right hand is missing, Mr. Howard, what is he?"

"Oh, he is a newspaper man. He has charge of one department in Mr. King's new paper."

They talked along a little while about different things said, and discussed some of the questions and



answers. At last, after a pause, Victoria said, "Do you know, Rachel, it seems a mystery to me that people can go on giving so much of their thought to little things when the world is so full of human misery. That was the question that touched me most tonight. That one about society spending so much time and money on pleasure."

"I think perhaps that made me think as much as any. But I don't see, Victoria, how I can do very much to help matters any. You are sacrificing something every day. I wish I could do something."

"You do. I need you. That may be selfish. But I feel the need of just what you have brought to me."

Rachel was silent awhile. Then she said almost timidly,

"Sometime you will not be satisfied with what I can give you. I will not be what you ought to have."

"Why not?" asked Victoria innocently. Then she suddenly seemed to understand what Rachel meant. She went over by the side of Rachel and kneeling down by her side, said with the most charming affection in tone and manner,

"Dear, strange as it may seem to you I have never had a lover. I think it is because my life has been too busy to 'keep regular company' with any one."



"But you are more than seventeen," said Rachel demurely.

"More than seventeen! Why I am going on twenty-four. No, no, Rachel, you must not be afraid I am going to leave you on that account. I have no room for any one but you and father and Victor and my violin. That is as much as a little body like me can manage." And so their talk ended that night.

The weeks went by and still there was little change in the condition of Mr. Stanwood. Finally one evening when Victoria was at a concert and Rachel was watching by the sick man the great change came. It was so sudden that Rachel was frightened. The doctor was sent for in great haste. But before he could reach the house the frail, sin-smitten diseased body had yielded up its spirit. There had been a gleam of consciousness at the last, just the murmuring of his children's names and that was all. Victoria was sent for and left the concert hall knowing that a crisis was at hand. She was not prepared, however, for the end at once. It came to her like a sudden blow. She reproached herself for not being at her father's side, although no one could have foreseen how or when the end would come.

Rachel was worth everything to Victoria at this time.



She showed unexpected resources of strength. Victoria wished the news sent to Victor. She would cable to London. She sent the brief message, "Father died last evening," and directed it to the care of the manager of the company with which Victor was engaged. It would be more likely to reach him that way.

An answer to the cable came the next morning. When it was brought in by Rachel, Victoria was standing by the coffin that contained the body of her father. She took the message and read it, "Victor supposed to be on the Continent. Left my company charged with gambling and forgery."

Surely Victoria's cup of sorrow was a full one. Even Rachel could not help her at this moment. The girl shut the door softly and went out, leaving Victoria alone with her dead, and with her God.



## CHAPTER XI.



YEAR has passed by since the death of Victoria's father. A year filled with large experience and growing usefulness. Into her life has passed a great sorrow and it has left her nobler, sweeter, more compassionate of the world's suffering. The greatest trial she has to bear is the knowledge of Victor's ruin. Since the day when she stood by the coffin where Rachel brought her the cable from London telling of Victor's fall in his old passion Victoria has not heard a word of him. She does not know whether he is living or dead. She tries to comfort herself with the hope that he is repentant and living obscurely but honestly somewhere and that sometime he will come back to her and together they will go on to live a better and more happy life. All that is a hope she cherishes. It makes her face serious often. But in spite of all that, it is a face of great beauty. Victoria without knowing it has grown beautiful. And to grow beautiful without knowing too much about it is the mark of a great and lovable character.

Rachel is her constant companion now. The two



live together with a housekeeper and a cousin of Victoria's father, an elderly woman who came shortly after Mr. Stanwood's death. The two girls, young women they are now, find their lives very full and busy. With all their duties, however, they find time to work in the slum district organized by John King's church, and some of their happiest, most interesting hours are passed in the work. King and Richard Bruce and Tom Howard with other members of the Question Class are frequent workers in the same district. The music classes organized by Victoria are held in the warehouse building where Tom and Richard used to teach night school. The building has been entirely made over now and is a warm, well-lighted commodious place for all kinds of industrial work. To the surprise of every one excepting John King, Rachel proves one of the best workers of them all. Her brief but sharp experience as a sewing girl has given her a knowledge of the trials and temptations of the working girls in the city and she has organized a plan for helping them which John King thinks may in time revolutionize the condition of the workers who sew for the sweat shops.

One evening after the different classes had gone away, John King and Richard, Tom, Victoria and



Rachel lingered in the Hall to have a little talk together about the work of the Institutional Church. After a little while Tom and Richard began to speak of the old times when they first knew John King.

"Remember the first night you came down here, Tom?"

"Remember it? Well I should think so!" Tom spoke half seriously, half humorously. "That was the night Dick gave his great untamed sleight of hand show," he went on, turning to Rachel, who had never heard the story of the loss of Tom's right hand. "I helped him. We shook money out of empty handkerchiefs, baked an omelet in my hat and ruined the hat, picked a handful of matches out of a boy's hair and did all the regulation tricks to a full house. We would have scored a complete success if it had not been for that boy 'Con.'" Tom paused thoughtfully and then went on.

"You see Dick was up there on the platform and Con, the worst boy I ever knew, even down here, threw an inkstand. It struck Dick right in the face and knocked him over. I thought he was killed and I jumped down and went for Con. It was the biggest kind of a fight then. Foot ball was a prize kindergarten to the scrimmage we had. I don't remember



very well how it happened. I was never so full of rage and fight in my life. I know if I could I would have flung that boy through the window over there, sash and all. I know I hoped it would kill him. I was not a Christian then. Well, Con got out his knife and stabbed me right through the palm of my hand. Do you know, Mr. King, I have felt that stab in my hand hundreds of times since the hand was taken off?"

"Very common sensation in case of amputation."

"Very uncommonly uncomfortable too, I can tell you. Well, I can remember struggling, and a faintness came over me and a blow in the face nearly finished me and I was falling when the door there burst open and Mr. King and some officers rushed in and the boys rushed out, all except Con, who was caught, and then I fainted away. I didn't know anything more until I came to in Mr. King's house."

"What became of the boy?"

"He was killed in jail by one of the prisoners. It was a great shock to Tom. Those were wild times, Tom, when the big railroad strikes were on. Remember how I tried to take your place on the Daily Universe as special reporter?"

"Tried to! You did it. Better than I ever could.



And all that time I lay around useless. I gave Mr. King no end of trouble."

"You were a very good sick person, Tom, only your appetite was something alarming when you began to get well."

"I should think," said Rachel a little timidly, "that you would dread to come into this room having such memories of it."

"Well I would, perhaps," said Tom, "only it has other memories now." The minute he said it he turned red to think that perhaps the rest were thinking his thought of the pleasant hours spent in the old hall with the new friends and workers, Victoria and Rachel.

"I should think the loss of your hand would make it hard for you to carry on your work as a reporter," said Rachel, nervously changing the subject. None of the others seemed to attach any significance to what Tom had said and he replied with a tone of relief,

"O, I learned to use my left hand. It was as much as my dearest friend could do, though, to read my efforts. Dick says it was like trying to decipher some of the Egyptian hieroglyphics on the mummy cases in the pyramids."

"It was worse than that, Miss Brooks," said John



King winking at Richard. "Tom wrote me a note while he was practicing with his left hand and I don't know to this day whether it was the answer to an invitation to dinner or a notice to be read from the pulpit respecting a special offering for the work done here. I was in such doubt about it that I filed it away in my famous Autograph Book and labeled it 'Interesting note from Alexander III., late Emperor of Russia,—written on the eve of the attempt to blow up the winter palace.'"

"Of course, Miss Brooks," said Tom with a grin, "I have to bear all this because Mr. King and Richard are jealous of my elegant penmanship. It is a well known fact that ministers and authors write such poor hands that magazines require those two classes of mankind to typewrite everything they send in for publication. I wish you could see some of my handwriting."

Tom pulled up again suddenly as Richard and John King laughed, and Rachel colored a little but looked all the prettier for it. The talk drifted on into plans concerning the work of the Institutional Department of the church and finally they went out, all walking along together up past John King's house. He stopped a few minutes at the steps to chat a little and finally



said good night and went in, leaving the young people with a word of hearty thanks to them for their very efficient help in his beloved church work.

"Shall we take the cars?" asked Richard, speaking for all four.

"Let's walk," said Tom, who always loved the exercise and never rode on the cable cars or in a carriage or cab when he could help it.

So they started for the north side, Richard escorting Victoria and Tom giving his arm to Rachel, who was very quiet at first but soon grew quite talkative and even merry as Tom rattled on in his hearty manner telling some funny stories in connection with his old work as a city reporter.

When they reached the bridge and started to cross, there was a delay owing to the draw being open, but Victoria and Richard had been far enough ahead to pass over just before the draw opened. Rachel suddenly grew very quiet. It was the bridge where Victoria had come to her that night so long ago, it seemed to her. Tom had never heard the story. He simply knew that Rachel had some good reason for regarding Victoria as her greatest friend.

"There was a girl threw herself off the end of this bridge once," said Tom innocently. He was nervous



and afraid Rachel was tired of him for being such poor company. "I remember writing it up for the Daily Universe. It was an awfully sad case. One of the girls in the tailor's establishments who had lost her place and—"

Tom felt Rachel's hand tremble on his arm "Come!" she said, stepping forward, "the bridge is moving. Let us hurry across." Tom felt as if he had made some blunder and wished he was at the bottom of the river. After they were well over and had walked a block or two on the other side, Rachel, whose agitation departed as quickly as it came, said, with some hesitation at first, then with complete frankness,

"I ought to tell you, perhaps, Mr. Howard, that it was on that bridge that Victoria, Miss Stanwood, saved me from just such a fate as that of the poor girl you mentioned. Pardon my manner. It all came over me like a new feeling after all these months as I stood there. I—I—thought maybe you knew."

"I didn't!" stammered Tom. "It's news to me. I beg your pardon. I hurt you."

"No! no, you didn't mean to. It was a great experience to me and—"

Rachel did not say any more and after an awkward pause Tom said, "I'm awfully sorry." Then he



began to talk about Victoria and Richard and John King and by the time the two reached the house Rachel seemed quite cheerful again. She asked him if he would not come in, but Richard was just coming down the steps and Tom thanked her, said good night and took Dick's arm as the two turned and started to walk back to their rooms.

The friends walked on without a word for some distance. At length Richard, drawing Tom's arm to his side, said in a voice that had a new meaning in it,

"Tom, old fellow, will you feel very bad if I tell you that I have begun to love some one else more than you?"

"No, I guess not. I'm ready to treat you in the same way."

Richard didn't seem to hear what Tom said. He went on,

"I'm the happiest man in Chicago. I feel like shouting out the news into the streets."

"What news?" said Tom. "It's pretty late for an evening edition."

"Tom," said Richard suddenly but in a quiet tone, "Will you be the best man at a wedding pretty soon?"

Tom stopped right in the middle of the sidewalk and drew a long breath. Then he said with a look



and accent that Richard was familiar with all through his college acquaintance, "I will if you will tell me how you proposed. That is, I will if I am not otherwise engaged myself at the time."

Richard laughed. Then he said like one who feels that the dignity and wondrousness of loving is beyond the reach of any ordinary exhibition of humor—

"Tom, God has wonderfully blessed my life. Miss Stanwood, Victoria" (the name seemed to come easily to him), "loves me. I didn't know surely before to-night. I know it now."

"I knew it long ago," said Tom, just as the two stepped upon the bridge. "Why didn't you ask me? Dick, it is beautiful."

"You mean she is."

"Yes, of course. Dick, dear fellow, congratulations seems like a feeble word, doesn't it? Or She? Every thing of course will be 'she' now. I'll get even with you, though. But say, old chum, what will you do, go on the stage, or will Miss Stanwood leave off playing and take to authorship?"

"Tom, I'll throw you over into the river if you make any fun of—" Richard partly lifted Tom off his feet as he playfully swung along still clinging to Tom's arm.



"No, don't," said Tom soberly. The words recalled Rachel's story. He was unusually reticent as Richard went on to talk of his own great happiness. As sometimes happens, even with large hearted natures like Richard's such an experience for a little while absorbed all his thoughts and Tom's manner was not particularly noticed. Only when the two friends reached their rooms and went in Richard said,

"Tom, I hope you will be as happy as I am some day."

"I hope I shall. But what shall I do for a best man in that case?"

"Well, won't I do?"

"Not if both weddings are on the same day."

"O, well, we will arrange that when the time comes." Richard laughed. Then he said looking earnestly and lovingly at his old chum,

"Tom, if you are in love with Rachel why don't you tell her so?"

"If," said Tom. "If water runs down hill. If the sun shines on a cloudless day. If, but there is no if about it."

"Tom," said Richard, giving him a little love pat on the back, "'faint heart ne'er won fair lady.' I don't think your case is altogether hopeless."



Tom shook his head somewhat doubtfully. Nevertheless he did not seem to be altogether despondent. He was heartily glad for Richard. He could not think of any one in all Chicago nearer his ideal for Richard's wife. And as for Richard himself he walked the streets next day the proudest most humbly glad and exultant soul on earth, he felt. And as for Victoria her romance had come to her so gradually, so naturally, so irresistibly that she gave her lover a heart that was capable of the utmost in sharing life's fortunes of good or evil with equal faith and joy. She had come to know and admire Richard in the year's acquaintance which ripened mutual friendship very fast, owing to their very frequent meetings at the Question Class and the church work down at the hall. She had read all of Richard's books and was surprised and delighted with them. He had rapidly won public favor and was counted to be one of the rising authors with a very high purpose in his writing. John King had told her a good deal of Richard in one way and another at odd times. The story of his early struggles as a writer, his work in the coal yards, his volunteer work at the night school and many other details touched Victoria very deeply. It is not a great way from admiration to a deeper feeling. And Victoria, woman grown now, saw her life beginning a



new chapter. The earth's old story, the divinest known to the human race, the experience sanctified and blessed by our Lord Himself, came into Victoria's life and she did not try to drive it out. She could not if she would. For there is nothing in all the worldwide universe of God more divine and beautiful than the true love of man and woman, nothing more ordained of God than the home life of the human race. When Rachel came in that night Victoria very simply and frankly told her.

"I thought," said Rachel a little roguishly, "that you were not ever going to leave me. You said something of the kind once."

"Great minds change," laughed Victoria. She added gently, "I think I know some one who will look after you so that you won't need me."

Rachel was sitting in front of an open fire but that is no reason why her face should flush so full of color.

"I don't think," Rachel spoke after a pause, "I don't think he will ever ask me."

"Of course he will. And it will not be very long before I shall be doubly happy, dear, in your happiness as well as my own." Victoria said it with tears in her eyes and Rachel looked up and whispered to her, "I am very glad for you."

When the Question Class met next time, John King



said as he called it to order, "There is a very unusual variety in the questions to-night. You must not be surprised if I have omitted several. Of course if you send in questions that no man on earth can answer I feel at liberty to leave them out of the box rather than put them and myself in the box at the same time."

Question. "Cannot a company of Christians engage in a social game of cards in their home as well as any other game?"

"There is nothing wicked in a game of cards as a game any more than there is in a game of checkers or dominoes or authors. One trouble with cards is the fact that their associations are bad. Gamblers use cards. Cards are found in every wine shop in France and every beer garden in Germany and every saloon restaurant in America. There is also a great abuse of card playing by those who have become experts in the game and hundreds of young men have wasted the most precious hours of their lives and ruined their prospects for success in life by yielding to the fascination of card parties night after night. The great objection to cards where there is any, is not because they are wicked or the game sinful, but that the associations are evil and the tendency of card players is invariably to waste too much precious time over the game. I know ten



young men who put in enough time winter evenings in card playing to learn a language or a trade. I do not know any game that uses up more valuable time than cards. Of course I am not referring to their use as a recreation or an amusement simply, but to the invariable tendency in society to abuse the recreation, the same as dancing is abused, and make of it an occasion for throwing away time that ought to be used wisely. The Christian law governing amusements is very simple. It is right and Christian to do anything for amusement that leaves the mind and soul pure, refreshed, more ready to do God's will, less selfish and with a growing love for Christ and His kingdom in the world. And any amusement that does not leave a person in that condition is probably harmful to mind, body, and soul."

Question. "Do you think it is dignified for a minister to ride a bicycle?"

"I do, if he doesn't fall off."

Question. "Is a church any more likely to fall into stereotyped ways with its meetings and services than other organizations?"

"No, considering the number of regular meetings held by the church in a year's time it does not repeat itself or get into ruts any more than literary clubs or lodges or any other societies. There is a uniform sameness



about anything that occurs regularly. Nothing is so regularly the same as the daily papers. They print the same kind of news in the same column in the same position on the page day after day, year after year. The church is as free from stereotyped ways as any organization that has as many meetings and services."

Question. "What is the use of public prayer? Did not Christ condemn it when he said, 'But thou, when thou prayest enter into thy chamber and when thou hast shut thy door pray to thy Father in secret and thy Father who seest in secret shall reward thee openly.' Did Christ ever pray in public?"

"Christ condemned the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees who were in the habit of praying in the public streets in order to make a show of their piety. That was the reason he told his disciples to pray at their homes in secret. But Christ certainly believed in public prayer on the proper occasion and when offered in a proper spirit. He himself prayed aloud at the grave of Lazarus while surrounded by a great crowd of people. He also offered a long audible prayer in the presence of his disciples. When the minister offers public prayer in church at a church prayer service or on any public occasion where it is proper it is for the purpose of devotion and recognition of divine pres-



ence and its supreme power. When the minister offers public prayer in the church service it should be as the mouth piece of all the people, bearing all their desires and communion up before the same throne of grace. Public prayer rightly used is an aid to public devotion and an inspiration to those who do not feel able to express in language their own vague but real wants."

Question. "Ought not people to learn how to pray in public as well as how to speak in public?"

"Yes, undoubtedly. A great many persons do not know how to pray in public. At the same time the prayers of an ignorant but devout person will often do more good to the hearers than the prayers of a cultured, intelligent person who prays to his audience instead of to God."

Question. "I am a clerk in a candy store. Christmas this year falls on Tuesday. My employer wants me to be at the store Sunday to get the trade of those people who can't find time to buy during the week. What ought I to do?"

"Your employer has no right to ask you to work on Sunday. You have a right to tell him that you will serve him faithfully and honestly six days but you cannot and will not work for any man unnecessarily on



Sunday. The man who hires labor or the corporation that employs flesh and blood and then demands work seven days in a week under threat of discharging the men in case of refusal to work seven days is guilty of the crime of re-establishing slavery. For what is it except slavery where a human being feels the grind of toil seven days in a week? If your employer says this is a special occasion and does not happen often, that is no argument. Once you have given up your Sunday to him it will be easier for him to get you to do it again. If I were in your place or any one's else I would not work for any man on Sunday to enable him to make a little more money. I would sooner lose my place and stand the chance of finding another. There are some things that the money and favor of an employer ought never to be able to buy, and among them ought to be a man's independence as regards his right to one day in seven for rest and worship."

Question. "I work in a railroad office in a room with fifty other young men. In a recent census of religious belief taken in this room only seven out of the fifty including myself were found to be in the habit of attending any religious service regularly. How can we seven men make our Christian lives felt by the



others? Is there anything specific that we can do to help make them Christians?"

"There is always the daily sermon of your character. Live your Christian life manfully and without cant or sanctimoniousness. Don't wear an air of holier-than-thou that will be sure to repel instead of attract to Christian life. This is the main thing. It is the constant thing. Any young man who isn't a fool or a blockhead can tell a Christian after he has worked in the same office with him awhile. Let your light shine, but don't keep sticking it uncomfortably into people's faces. They can see it plain enough if it is burning. And just keep living your Christian faith right along day after day. Christian character is like a bicycle, you must keep it moving right along, if you don't, it will tumble over. There will also perhaps come special opportunities when you can help particular men to become Christians. When they come don't be afraid of seizing them. If you really want to win a man to Christ he won't feel offended if you tell him so when the right time comes. Only you want to be pretty sure that your own life is better than his. Else how will he see what there is to gain by being like you?"

Question. "I sometimes feel as if I would like to be a Christian but I never have any emotion when I listen



to preaching or when I am urged to live a Christian life. Am I to wait for the proper feeling before I am converted?"

"When you want to go to New York you go to one of the railroad stations in the city and buy a ticket. Then when the train is ready you present yourself at the gate and the gateman directs you to your train and you get on board. That is easy, isn't it? Well, is it any harder to start in the Christian life if you want to go that way? What makes a Christian? Emotion? Feeling? Agony? Tears? No. Simply belief in the Lord Jesus Christ and daily life according to his teachings. The directions for becoming a Christian are just as simple as directions in railroad stations for going to some place on the road. After you buy your ticket to New York and the gateman says, 'There's your train,' you don't hang around the gate saying, 'I don't feel any particular emotion; I am afraid I ought to wait until I feel different before I go to New York.' The railroad official would stare and say if he had time to tend to your case, 'What's the matter, young man? What's feeling got to do with it? Lemme see your paste-board. Why that's all right. New York. Get right in. This train's going there. All aboard for New York via Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and Albany!' And if you



don't get on board, why, you would not get to New York, feeling or no feeling.

"Is it any different about starting for Heaven via the Christian life? You believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as the Eternal Life. You accept his life as your example. You put your faith in him and as a matter of will, of mind, of reason, of belief, you start on the Christian life. Christ never appealed to the emotions of men, he always appealed to their wills, their reason, their faith, to turn to righteousness and have salvation. There may be emotion in plenty, feeling in plenty at the time a human being begins to live the new life. But the emotion, the feeling, is not a condition of being saved. It is simply an accompaniment. Just as you might be weeping as you got on the train for New York as you thought of your past life and its sins in this city. But your weeping would not be necessary to get you to New York. It would simply be a circumstance of your trip."

Victoria who was present at this meeting of the Question Club went home with a new thought, new to her of the Christian life. She had never professed her faith. She had always had the deepest reverence for Christ and more and more each year she had come to have a growing need of that great Presence in human life. Talking with Richard that evening and on other



days that followed she looked at the life of Christ and its relation to her own with joy and a conviction that made her say first to herself, afterwards to Richard, "The Christ has become a necessity to me. I am ready to confess him. I want to live the life." To Richard all this deepened and intensified his affection. And for both of these souls as they planned the future happiness of their lot together the strongest tie that bound them daily more closely to each other was the fact that the religious faith of each was Christian and the motive of each was service to the Master in His kingdom on earth.

All this experience developed Victoria wonderfully. The work she was doing in the slums, the volunteer service of her violin in the hospitals and jails took on a new and more blessed meaning. The Christ love began to breathe through it all.

One Sunday shortly after this particular time, she was playing in a large hospital under the management of a Catholic sisterhood. It was a new place. She had never been there before. There were fifty beds in the ward. She stood nearly in the middle of the ward as she played. Richard, Tom, and Rachel had come with her that afternoon. She had played a beautiful hymn, one of her own composing and had begun another selection softly, when to Richard's alarm Victoria suddenly



dropped the violin and running up to one of the cots fell upon her knees by the side of it crying out, "Victor! Victor!" The rest drew near. There lay the brother, a wreck of his former handsome appearance. He gazed stupidly at Victoria and made some motion with his lips but did not speak.

"Victor! Don't you know me, Victor, your sister!"

"Is he your brother, madam?" inquired the doctor who was present.

"He is her twin brother," said Richard gently. "He has been lost to her for over a year."

Victoria still called Victor's name as she kneeled by him. But there was no answering speech. The doctor said gravely,

"He was brought here a stranger two days ago. He was found in the streets. He has had a stroke of paralysis affecting the throat and vocal cords. He cannot speak. It is doubtful if he will ever speak again."

"He was a remarkable singer," said Tom in a low voice looking at the doctor while Rachel and Richard both tried to comfort Victoria who seemed overcome with the unexpected meeting.

"He will never sing again," said the doctor bluntly. "His vocal cords are destroyed."

Victor must have heard him. A horrible look came



over his face, wasted and soiled with passion and vice, and half raising himself on the cot by an awful exercise of will and desire he uttered a sound that was more animal than human. It was the last effort of his once beautiful but abused gift of voice. At the terrible sound Victoria lay back again, and for the first time in her life fainted.

Victor lay there with a face of impotent rage. He looked so ghastly that Tom exclaimed,

“He is dying!”

The doctor bent over him.

“No, he will live.”

“But what a life!” thought Tom and the rest as they stood there smitten for the time being into infinite pity for the wasted broken humanity that lay there, tossed like wreck on the shore of the tempest beaten sea where so many once fair freighted human vessels on the mighty ocean of life have made shipwreck of their immortal souls.



## CHAPTER XII.



THAT scene in the hospital with Victor laid its mark on Victoria as long as she lived. It was a blessing for her that Richard and Rachel had come into her thought of her future. These two tenderly came to her in this present trouble and she realized as the days went on that love and friendship are mighty boons to the distressed. For Victor did not recover. It was true that the surgeon had spoken the right word, the beautiful voice was gone forever. It was not until sometime had gone by that Victoria learned all the details of Victor's career and his final return to Chicago and appearance in the hospital. These came to her from various sources as days went on.

Victor had fallen again soon after securing his position with the London company. After leaving Victoria he had fully determined to reform and make the most of his vocal gift. For a short time he worked hard and lived the life of strictest morality. During that time he was all the rage in London. His great natural gift was supplemented for a little while by the kind of personal righteousness which makes such a gift a most tremen-



dous carrying power with the people. But one day at a Club restaurant he fell in with one of his New York acquaintances. He was persuaded to take up the cards again. Just a friendly game. He hesitated, yielded, and fell. His course from that day was very rapidly downward. He gambled nightly. Lost heavily. Forged a note of a nobleman who was a semi-professional gambler and fled to the continent. He did not dare hire himself to sing for fear of discovery. He lived no one knew how. Only every day saw him sinking lower in vice and dissipation. An opportunity to sail for America came to him just when he was in danger of being arrested for his London crime. Once in New York he found himself penniless and completely adrift. It was then that he thought of going to Chicago to borrow money or get it in some way from Victoria. So low as this had he sunk. He managed to secure his transportation to Chicago. The very day he entered the city an accident had happened to him in one of the streets. He could never tell what it was in detail. The shock of some collision either with a car or a cab had so affected him that in a half dazed condition he had wandered about the city nearly all night. Once he realized that he had fallen down and was lying in a pool of water near a hydrant. How long he had been there



he did not know. Then his limbs grew numb and cold. He lost all sense of his surroundings and when he came to himself he was in the hospital where Victoria discovered him. But it was true that paralysis of the upper part of his body and of the vocal cords had in a moment of time thrown him a helpless wreck upon the care of the world. He could never sing again and he would never move about again. He was more helpless than a baby.

Victoria took him home. There was nothing the hospital could do for him that she could not do. Victor showed no feeling but rage and madness at his condition. Victoria shuddered to think that if he had the power of speech he would probably use it to curse the day he was born. As time went on his feelings towards his condition did not appear to change. There was possibly a little softening in his manner when Victoria played for him as she always did at the close of the day no matter how tired she might be or what her professional duties had been. Aside from that, he lay there in his room on the chair specially made for him, with a hard heart and a rebellion against his fate that made the burden of his death in life a terrible thing for his sister to bear. Only her Christian faith came to her at this time to support her in the greatest trial of her life.



With it was the love of Richard who now claimed the right to share all her burdens. "We will care for him together. It will be a part of my life with yours," he had said at once as soon as Victoria moved Victor to her house. Victoria had smiled up to Richard through her tears and the future was already bright with peace and hope because there was some one to help lift this sorrow.

The year had come to its close and the Question Class met for its last meeting at John King's. It was the regular Monday night and happened to be the 31st of December. Many of the questions were appropriate to the thoughts of the old year. John King said he would save those for the last and answer a few miscellaneous questions first.

Question. "If you had offended a person not meaning to do so would you apologize to him for having offended him?"

"Yes. Why not. If I offended some one not meaning to, he may not know that I did not intend it. He may think I did it purposely. If I go to him frankly and tell him it was unintentional it may change his feeling towards me and prevent a disagreeable and unnecessary misunderstanding between us. Some people think they must stand upon their rights and never yield an inch unless they are in the wrong. But in a case of un-



intentional offense to a person there is nothing to be gained by a proud refusal to say anything to the offended person. It is true there are always some people who are continually imagining slights and insults. They feel so important that they think other people are thinking of them all the time. It would be foolish to be continually running to these people and asking their pardon for having offended them. The best way sometimes is to let them alone and say nothing. But in the case of a misunderstanding where one has become offended through a misjudgement of your action it wouldn't hurt you and may do much good to apologize. We must remember this. There is no shame or remorse or repentance in such an apology. If you don't mean to offend a person who is offended all you have to apologize for may be possibly a little carelessness or ignorance or haste or something of that sort. Of course if you have once explained matters and the offended person still feels offended in spite of your apology you have done all you can. But you will not miss anything to do that. You will be the better for it."

Question. "What is the remedy for a person who does not keep the Y. P. S. C. E. pledge?"

"Do you mean the remedy for some one else to apply to the person or the remedy for the person to apply to



himself? There is no remedy for a person who breaks his word except being born again. But this question is honestly asked no doubt and ought to be seriously answered. There are a good many young people who take the pledge in the Endeavor Society without realizing what it means. Just as there are a good many people who join the church and never think of their promises to support the church services or do their share of its work. What is the remedy? More personal Christianity. More understanding of the meaning of consecration and devotion to the cause of the Kingdom of God. This is not a remedy that can be prescribed and given to the patient like a patent medicine. But a member of the Y. P. S. C. E. who regularly fails to keep the pledge is in need of more honesty with himself if he wants to continue as a faithful member of the Endeavor or that particular society. If the person is a member and wants to be a member of the Endeavor it is far more harmful to him to take the Society Pledge and then not keep it than it is never to join the society at all. It is always a harm to character to say you will do a thing, to make a promise and then fail to do it."

Question. "Is it desirable for a young man to spend so much time in muscular development or athletic sports?"



“Not if the result is the making of muscle in a professional manner. Professional athletes are obliged to keep at it all their lives if they wish to live. Some of the most noted athletes have died of consumption or heart disease within a short time after they have ceased to keep up their professional training and the average duration of the professional athlete's life is far below that of the average healthy citizen. What is needed by the average man for business, law, medicine, the ministry, or teaching, is not abnormal biceps or abnormal lungs and heart but good sound organs all working harmoniously and well balanced. The longest lived people in the world are ministers and as a rule they are not noted for excessive muscular development. As a rule they live temperate, wholesome, moral lives, do not train any part of the body to excess and are cheerful and contented in spite of small salaries and large drains on vital energy. The best physical training does not have for its object the making of professional athletes but sound, wholesome, well-proportioned bodies fitted to stand the wear and tear of the ordinary average daily life.”

Question. “Would you advise a young man to marry before he has made his fortune?”

“It depends on the girl he marries. Yes, in most



cases I should say a young man need not wait until he has made his fortune. He ought to be able to support his wife before he marries. That is, he ought to be able to provide a home. That home may be very humble but it may be very happy. If the young wife is the right sort of a helpmeet she will wish to assist in making the home happier and more comfortable and useful as her husband's business prospers and grows. If I were a young woman I should hesitate to marry a young man who had waited until he had made his fortune before he asked me to be his wife. I should feel as if he thought his fortune was worth more than himself. Thousands of the happiest, best marriages ever known have been those where the young husband and wife have shared together from the start the responsibilities and toils and pleasures of home making."

Question. "Ought every girl to know how to keep house?"

"Of course. Even the Queen of Holland it is said can prepare a meal and serve it better than any of the servants in the palace. It does not make any difference how much money a woman may have or how many servants she can hire, not to know how to keep house herself may determine her happiness as home keeper."

Question. "How soon do you call a person old?"



"Most anywhere between one and one hundred. Some people are old at twenty-five. Some are young at seventy-five. Some never grow old at all. Years do not make people grow old. It is the heart, the feelings, the within, not the without. Old age is a purely relative term. I used to think thirty was a mark of growing old. But after reaching and passing that mark I am inclined to put it at fifty or sixty, but I don't want anyone to call me old even then."

Question. "What advantage is there in thinking over the past?"

"Not any unless the result is to make the future better. The past is full of lessons. If we learn them we shall be better for it. Nations and individuals can learn very much from the history of past experiments, trials, mistakes or ventures. He is the wise man who profits by his experience. The fool is the one who never learns from experience. It is good to go back over a year's history and note where we have failed and been wrong and made blunders and then, not dwelling unnecessarily over what is gone, use the heritage of it all to go on in a stronger, wiser way. The greatest value of the past lies in its directing power for the present and future. Every year sets up its guide posts of warning or direction. To fall into the same pit again



or to get lost in the same woods a second time when the past year has plainly marked the safe and right way, is to stumble through life blind and foolish never profiting by that truest of all teachers, Experience."

Question. "Do you think it does any good to make New Year's Resolutions?"

"Yes, if you keep them. It is good to make good resolutions every day and keep them. A good many people make New Year's Resolutions like church conventions or conferences before election and then break them all to pieces when it comes to voting. All the to-days ought to be better than the yesterdays; all the to-morrows better than the to-days. Why make so many good resolves on New Year's Day. Why not make them all the year every morning? New Year's resolutions are too much like Sunday religion. They won't stand the wear and tear of the market place and the counting room and the rush of the world's traffic."

Question. "What is the hope of the world for the New Year?"

"The hope of the world for the New Year is the New Life as lived and taught by Jesus Christ. The hope of the world is in the possibilities of Regeneration of Humanity. The greatest need of our nation, of our country, of all nations, of all countries, is a need of



being born again. The most hopeful truth ever taught by Christ was the truth of regenerated manhood and womanhood. In a little while, two or three hours, we shall as we mark the sweep of earthly time step over the threshold into a new year. It will mean a great deal to us if we put off the old man at that time. It will mean everything. A new humanity is the only hope of a better world. And a new humanity cannot come to the world except it come through the Christ of God. He is the Hope of the world. He is the Way and the Truth and the Life."

John King paused a moment as he reached the end of the questions and looked thoughtfully and lovingly around the room. Then the sight of his familiar company touched him deeply: There were Tom and Rachel, Richard and Victoria, Miss Fergus and many others, some of them careless, indifferent, thoughtless, and others noble, prayerful, Christian in heart and purpose, all of them with youth and hope and joy in life. John King's heart went out to them.

"It may be," he said gently after a pause, "that I may not be with you through this new year. Changes will come to all or many of you. We have asked a great many questions this year. No one knows better than myself how incomplete have been the answers. But I



hope there is one question we may all ask and answer before we meet again. It is this,

“Am I in possession of that eternal life which is the new life of the soul? That is the question. And I cannot answer that for you. You must each one answer that for yourself. May God grant you answer it right, and before we say to one another ‘I wish you a Happy New Year.’”

The next day Richard was sitting in the room which Tom and he had used now for sometime as a common work shop. He was finishing a new story. It had cost him the hardest work of his life. For three years he had toiled over it and this New Year's day he had the satisfaction of putting the final touches to the manuscript. It lay in a good sized pile before him and he leaned back in his chair and looked at it thoughtfully. His mind went back to his first attempt and his struggles to get a publisher. The same ideal in writing still possessed him. But he had now an added enthusiasm in his love for Victoria. “I wonder what she will think of it?” he kept saying to himself. He had not told her yet. He wished to make her a little surprise. So Richard was a very happy person that morning as he finally rose and after his old habit began to walk up and down the room talking to himself. Tom had gone out early



on some business and the two were planning to go and see King a little while in the evening. He had invited them to a little company, he said. It was very select and he wanted Richard and Tom to wear their best clothes and be as entertaining and handsome as possible. The boys were accustomed to King's humor, but they knew from the way he spoke that they would meet some specially interesting people.

Suddenly the door burst open and Tom entered. He walked right up to his old chum and said—

“Dick, will you be best man at a wedding pretty soon?”

“What!” cried Richard holding Tom off at arm's length. Then he answered with an imitation of Tom's manner, “Well, I will if I'm not otherwise engaged!” Then in his own manner;

“Tom, is it congratulations? Shall I wish you and Rachel a Happy New Year?”

“Yes, only you must say Rachel and you. Always mention the most important first. Dick, I don't know just how I brought it around but Rachel told me this morning that she was willing, seeing it was me, to change her name from Brooks to Howard. I must have acted like a fool or an idiot but Rachel seemed to under-



stand what I wanted. She's the brightest girl I ever saw."

"Tom, I believe if the truth were known Rachel had to do the proposing!"

"It's false!" shouted Tom. "I was as bold as a man walking up to a Krupp gun loaded with dynamite." Tom was bursting with excitement and Richard never saw him so wonderfully happy. He pulled out of his overcoat pockets a lot of toys and laid them on the table. Richard laughed until he cried at the sight. Tom coming home from his interview with Rachel had not been able to contain himself. Running across a peddler of comic toys he had bought two pockets full. There was a tin monkey that would climb up a string if another string was pulled. There was a mouse made of brass that ran around on the floor in a very lifelike way. And a small cat that when wound up chased a mouse by clock work. There was a snake made of joints of wood and rubber that turned around the leg of a chair in a very serpentine fashion, and a great tin spider that crawled backward and forward over the table. Tom set them all going and laughed and laughed with Richard until his curious excitement was worked off. Then suddenly he swept the toys up into a corner of the room, threw the cushion of a chair over them and said—



"Dick, you must think I am crazy. But I never proposed to a girl before and this has upset me. But Dick, Dick, I am the happiest man in the city."

"I claim that distinction," replied Richard.

"Oh, well, yours is an old claim. No, you can't be as happy as I am. Miss Stanwood is a genius and you are a genius. Now geniuses can't love each other as much as common people like me and Rachel."

"You mean Rachel and me."

"Of course. And I didn't mean to call her a common person either. Why Dick, she—"

"Yes, everything will be 'she' now," replied Richard laughing.

Tom sobered down at once. All the excitement and the fun vanished. He sat down and after a while said,

"Dick, if I did blunder in the asking I know enough to know that the greatest blessing that ever came into my life has come now. I thank God he has so filled my life with this happiness. And in His sight I mean to be worthy of it."

"God has been very good to us both, old fellow." Richard threw his arm over Tom's shoulder as they sat near together and if there was a hint of moisture in the eyes of these two grown up young men no one saw it



except the eye of the tin spider which peeped out from under one corner of the cushion.

On the way to John King's that evening Tom said, "Dick, we ought to tell John King the news and engage him in advance. He's awfully busy in June."

"June! You don't mean to say Rachel will marry you this year?"

"She will if I ask her," said Tom boldly. "I never believed in long engagements."

Richard laughed and when the two reached the minister's house he insisted that Tom should break the news seeing he had mentioned it.

They were early and the other guests had not arrived. John King was alone. His sister was superintending some work in the other room.

"Come before the fire," he said after hats and overcoats had been removed.

They sat down and John King at once said, "An open fire is the most home like thing I know."

Richard nudged Tom as an indication that this was a good opening for the news of his engagement. Tom shuffled nervously in his chair and then said, to Richard's discomfiture,

"Have you heard the news, Mr. King, of Miss Stanwood's engagement?"



"No," said King turning around quickly. "To what company? Is she going to leave Chicago?"

"Company!" ejaculated Tom. "Oh, I see. Why to the Richard Bruce company, Limited."

King sat up and looked over at Richard with an impulsive look of very great delight.

"Bruce, is that a fact?"

"Yes, sir, very much so."

"Then I congratulate you on having won the most lovely young woman in all Chicago."

"I don't know about that," put in Tom. "I won't fight over it though."

King looked over at Tom with another gleam of light in his great dark eyes.

"Well, well, to think of you two fellows going off together in this way. Oh, you needn't tell me, Tom. I don't need to be knocked down to take a hint. Only I don't believe the pretty Miss Rachel said yes so very long ago or I should have known it before this."

"She proposed to Tom this morning, Mr. King," said Richard, "and Tom couldn't help himself."

"Didn't want to either," replied Tom.

"Boys," said King rising and standing before the fire. "I am not used to talking without manuscript



and this news takes me unprepared. I don't know just what to say."

"You might propose three cheers and a tiger," suggested Tom.

Just then the bell rang and King said, "Give me time to think it over. Meanwhile, dear fellows, you have my heartiest congratulations. The other guests have arrived. I think you know them."

Richard and Tom rose as the figures came into the fire lit room. They had been looking so hard at the fire that they could not see very distinctly. Then John King said with great formality, "Miss Stanwood, Mr. Bruce. Miss Brooks, Mr. Howard. I believe you have met before." For a minute they all stood there solemnly and then Tom said, "Happy to make your acquaintance, Miss Brooks." Something in his tone was so irresistibly funny that Victoria's pure sweet laughter was instantly caught up by all of them and just then John King's sister announced dinner.

"Come," said King with his most delightful heartiness, "come, Victoria. I am old enough to say so, Miss Stanwood, to-night. Victoria and Richard, you may sit here, and Rachel and Tom, you may sit here."

After grace had been asked King looked at the very happy faces and said, "It looks as if I had planned this



meeting, but honest now I didn't. I had invited three or four other members of our Institutional Class but at the last moment they sent word they could not come."

"Do you feel very sorry, sir?" asked Tom.

"I'll try to be reconciled to their absence, Tom."

"So will we," said Tom with a look at Rachel.

"The old, old story," murmured John King as he sat there delighted with this company of happy lovers. "Heaven grant they may have many Happy New Years in the love of their true hearts and the service of God."

What is the end of our story is really the beginning of the story of our characters. Victoria and Rachel were married at Victoria's house in June, as Tom had suggested. It was a quiet wedding occasion and of course John King was the minister. Tom and Rachel began housekeeping in one of the suburbs. Victoria after her marriage left the public stage and gave her great musical talent entirely for the relief of the distressed and suffering and sinful. Richard and she worked together in the dark places of humanity and gave of their best and choicest for the blessing of the world, and always in their home there was the burden calmly and lovingly borne of the wreck of Victor. Every night of her life Victoria played for him. The music seemed to quiet his restless rage of soul but did



not seem to change him. The burden was always the same. It remained in the home life of these two children of God and the Master's strength upheld them in it all.

The evening of the last day of the year was drawing to its close when Victoria and Richard who had been sitting before the fire after tea heard steps outside and presently the bell rang and Rachel and Tom came in. The visits between the friends were frequent and they drew up chairs about the fire and chatted over old times as the approaching New Year carried them back to the events of a year ago.

"Is it true, Mrs. Howard," inquired Richard, "that Tom was so confused about a year ago tomorrow that he didn't know what he was talking about?"

Rachel, prettier than ever, turned to Tom and said, "Tom, what did you tell Mr. Bruce that morning?"

"Honest now, I didn't tell him anything in detail—only—that I was an idiot and that wasn't any news to Dick."

"An idiot! After you left me?"

"Of course!" said Tom boldly. "I am always out of my mind away from you." They were all laughing in the lightness of their hearts over this not very serious talk when the bell rang again and soon John King was ushered in.



"What! Firelight! No, don't light up for me. Let me sit here and grow young where you young people can't see my grey hairs."

So they widened the circle and let him in and King led them to bring up the old times and noted it with great pleasure as the light revealed the pure development of face and soul in each one of his young friends.

Finally Victoria arose and went into the next room where Victor lay. She was gone several moments and at last to the surprise of the rest she came back wheeling Victor.

"I asked him if he didn't want to come out here to-night," Victoria whispered to Richard as she bent down over him. "And he said yes."

She began to play while the rest sat in the firelight and the pale set face of the once proud handsome Victor stared out of its reclining position with the firelight glancing on it so that John King from his position was the only one of the company who clearly caught any glimpse of it.

Victoria played, as she always did, with a tenderness and pathos that had lost but little since the day of her public triumphs. To-night she played something of her own composing. It was a prayer. The friends sat in perfect silence. John King had his hands clasped



over his knee. The fire danced on the wall. The music seemed to be a part of the light. Victor's face lay white and unmoved as always. Suddenly as John King looked up at this white cold face, a tear rolled over its cheek. The firelight revealed that much. No one else saw it. Not even Victoria. Only one tear. "Yet it might mean a soul redeemed," John King thought, "No," he said to himself, "I will not say anything to Victoria about it to-night. I will speak of it to-morrow." The music went on, and to John King it came from heaven now. When it ceased, Victoria wheeled Victor back into the other room.

Mr. King had already risen to go.

"A Happy New Year to you all. The happiest of all your lives!" He spoke to all four of them but he looked at Victoria and Richard thinking of that warm tear that had rolled over that marble cheek.

"The same to you, sir!" came the greeting from the four friends as they stood together and John King went out and left them there on the threshold of another great stretch of God's time, not knowing the future but ready to commit it to God's keeping and strong in the service of Him who is the rightful Master of us all.

THE END.



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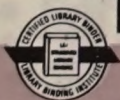








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